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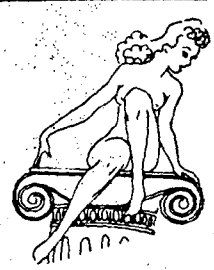

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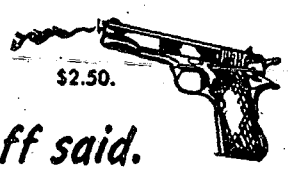

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Front cover painting by Robert Gipson Jones, illustrating a scene from "The Secret Of Elena's Tomb."

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VOLUME 9 NUMBER 5

All Stories Complete

THE SECRET OF ELENA'S TOMB (Short novel—37,500).....by Karl Tanzler von Cosel..... 8
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The true story of the death—and rejuvenation of Elena Hoyos Mesa; a startling revelation!

COME ALONG WITH ME (Novelette—17,000).....by S. M. Tenneshaw..... 78
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The two little men wanted to take Mr. Jones away—but he didn't want to go . . .

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They were just ordinary puffballs, until Professor Lippert started to work on them . . .

ONCE TO DIE (Short—4,000).....by John and Dorothy de Courcy 126
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Buck Harper wanted to die for his crime—but he was afraid he couldn't be killed! . . .

THE CHILDREN'S ROOM (Novelette—12,000).....by Raymond F. Jones..... 136
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It was a special room in the library for children—and only children could find it . . .

THE SHROUD-SEWERS (Short—7,000).....by Berkeley Livingston..... 160
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The old men were skilled garment makers, and their specialty was the sewing of shrouds . . .

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

FIRST off this month we've got some mighty good news for all you readers. You've been after us for a long time to put FANTASTIC ADVENTURES back on a monthly schedule. Well, up until now we haven't been able to do that, what with paper restrictions, printing difficulties, and so on. But with this issue we're happy to announce that from now on FA will be issued each and every month! Don't ask us where we got the paper—it's probably as big a mystery to us as it is to you—and anyway all we're interested in is the fact that we *are* going monthly. So don't forget to reserve your copy in advance at your favorite magazine dealer. We can hear you cheering!

WE'VE got some mighty fine stories in this month's issue. And more than that, we're presenting as our lead novel a *fact* story. This is in no way a fiction story. It is entirely true, written by the man who performed the scientific experiment. Guess we better hold on here a little and do a bit of explaining. You see, what we're talking about is "The Secret of Elena's Tomb" which begins on page 8. This is the true story behind the story that made headlines all over the world in 1940. Maybe you recall reading some of the details of the man, Karl Tanzler von Cosel, a German scientist, who took the dead body of Elena Hoyos Mesa from her tomb and performed one of the most sensational experiments upon her, an experiment that according to Mr. von Cosel was in actuality a successful attempt in restoring life to the dead! Mr. von Cosel spent some time in prison, and it made him, as he says, a bitter man. It is not for us as editors, or you as readers, to judge whether his term in prison was a miscarriage of justice. But we do have the facts of the case in their *entirety* in von Cosel's own words. And *as* facts, they recount one of the most fantastic adventures any man ever encountered. Mr. von Cosel made a special trip to Chicago to talk to us about his manuscript, and we received the undeniable impression that he was a man perfectly sound mentally, and what is more important, scientifically. Of course, his record speaks for itself in this last respect. He holds nine degrees, and made a name for himself in scientific circles in Europe long before he ever came to America. He is no amateur dabbler with coils and chemicals. He *knows* what he is talking about—and more so, what he is doing. It is of course impossible to say what might have come of his experiment had he been able to continue it without interruption. No man can say—except possibly von Cosel himself. And the world is apparently not willing to accept his word. But you may judge for yourself after reading his story. And we would also like to point out that not only is this an account of a great scientific effort, but also the story of an undying love, a love so strong it has weathered the barrier of the grave. They say that love can make a man do great things. Karl von Cosel's love for his Elena then is what drove him onward with all the scientific zeal he possessed. Read the story, and after you finish it see if you don't agree with us that *"greater love hath no man. . ."*

"FOR SWEEPING OR FLYING?"

SOME time back the staff of FA was having coffee. It was a dull, dreary morning outside, raining, and generally miserable. To put some life into things we started throwing story titles around. Someone came up with the title, "Come Along With Me," and S. M. Tenneshaw snapped his fingers and started putting a plot together around the title. We sat back and listened, and after a few more cups of coffee the story was ready for his typewriter. The result is on page 78 of this issue, and we think it turned out pretty well. It's all about a man named Jones who wanted peace and quiet in his penthouse apartment. But he didn't

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get it. Everything started with a burglar named Smith—and then two strange little men showed up and tried to get Jones to come along with them. To make matters worse (or better) a beautiful woman also tried to take him somewhere. (Exactly where she wouldn't say). It all sounded very confusing to Jones, and it was! All he wanted was to be left alone. . . . We won't say anything more about the story because that would spoil it for you. But it's got everything a good fantasy should have—and more!

ROBERT BLOCH, one of your great favorites, is back again this month with a story entitled: "The Mad Scientist." The story concerns a scientist who crossed mushrooms and puffballs. The result he got was something very interesting indeed. But you'll find that out for yourself. We have, incidentally, seen all too little of Bob in FA lately. Don't you readers agree? And while we're talking about his current story, we can't forget to mention that another old favorite of yours is back this month too—illustrating Bob's story. We're speaking, of course, of Virgil Finlay. We think the illustration he did for "The Mad Scientist" is a pip. (That's a word we haven't used in a long time!)

COMPARATIVE newcomers to FA, John and Dorothy de Courcy present a short story this month, entitled, "Once to Die." You've probably read some of the de Courcy stories in our big sister magazine, AMAZING STORIES, and if you have we don't have to tell you that you can always count on the de Courcys to come up with something "different." In this present yarn you'll meet a man who has been sentenced to death in the electric chair, and is afraid—afraid he won't die! With that much of a lead you'll probably want to get right to the story and find out for yourself. just why he thinks he won't die—and why he wants to . . .

ANOTHER newcomer to the pages of FA, but by no means a newcomer to the writing game, is Raymond F. Jones, whose story, "The Children's Room," starts on page 136. This is the type of story where you won't find a lot of action, but you will find a deep, moving, psychological motivation. Mr. Jones writes about a room in a library that is reserved for children only. The peculiar thing, however, is that nobody in the library is aware of the room, and yet it is there. It is a peculiar room, this "Children's Room." When certain children go into it they don't come out with the usual books allotted to children. They have "special" books, volumes that *teach* them certain things that not even the most educated adult would understand. And there is a purpose behind this teaching, as you will find out before you finish the story. It is always a pleasure to present a story of this type on occasion. We're quite certain you'll enjoy it and be asking us to get Mr. Jones to write more frequently for your favorite magazine. Anyway, let us know how you liked it.

FINISHING up the stories for this month, is your old favorite, Berkeley Livingston. This time Berk comes up with a unique story that has an equally unique title. "The Shroud-Sewers" is the story of a certain group of old men who sit in a very old temple, busily sewing away. They have a strange task, these old men. For the garments they sew are shrouds—shrouds for the living who are yet to die. And each person has one of his own—waiting for him, sewed by these ancient men whose fingers never tire, never stop. . . . But then, one day, the *Shroud-Sewers* stopped their work. Maybe they were bored, possibly they were irked by something, but nevertheless, they stopped their sewing. And as soon as they stopped it became impossible for anyone to die! For without the shroud, death was impossible. What happened in our world after this is what makes the story unique. We feel safe in saying that you'll agree with us that Berkeley Livingston has come up with another top-notch yarn. A good habit for any writer!

WE SHOULD call special attention to the swell cover Bob Jones did for this month's issue. You readers have told us many times that we have the best artists in the field—and we have to agree with you! Along these lines, wait for next month's cover, also by Mr. Jones. It's another honey, and as Jones aptly put it, one of his best.

WE'VE got some swell stories lined up for the coming issues too. Leading off next month is a short novel by tremendously popular Richard S. Shaver. We won't say much about "Witch of the Andes" here, because that would spoil the treat you have waiting for you. But Shaver's name should guarantee you a lot of good enjoyable reading. And there'll be more of your favorites too. So we'll be seeing you there . . . *Rap.*

"HOT ENOUGH FOR YOU, BOSS?"

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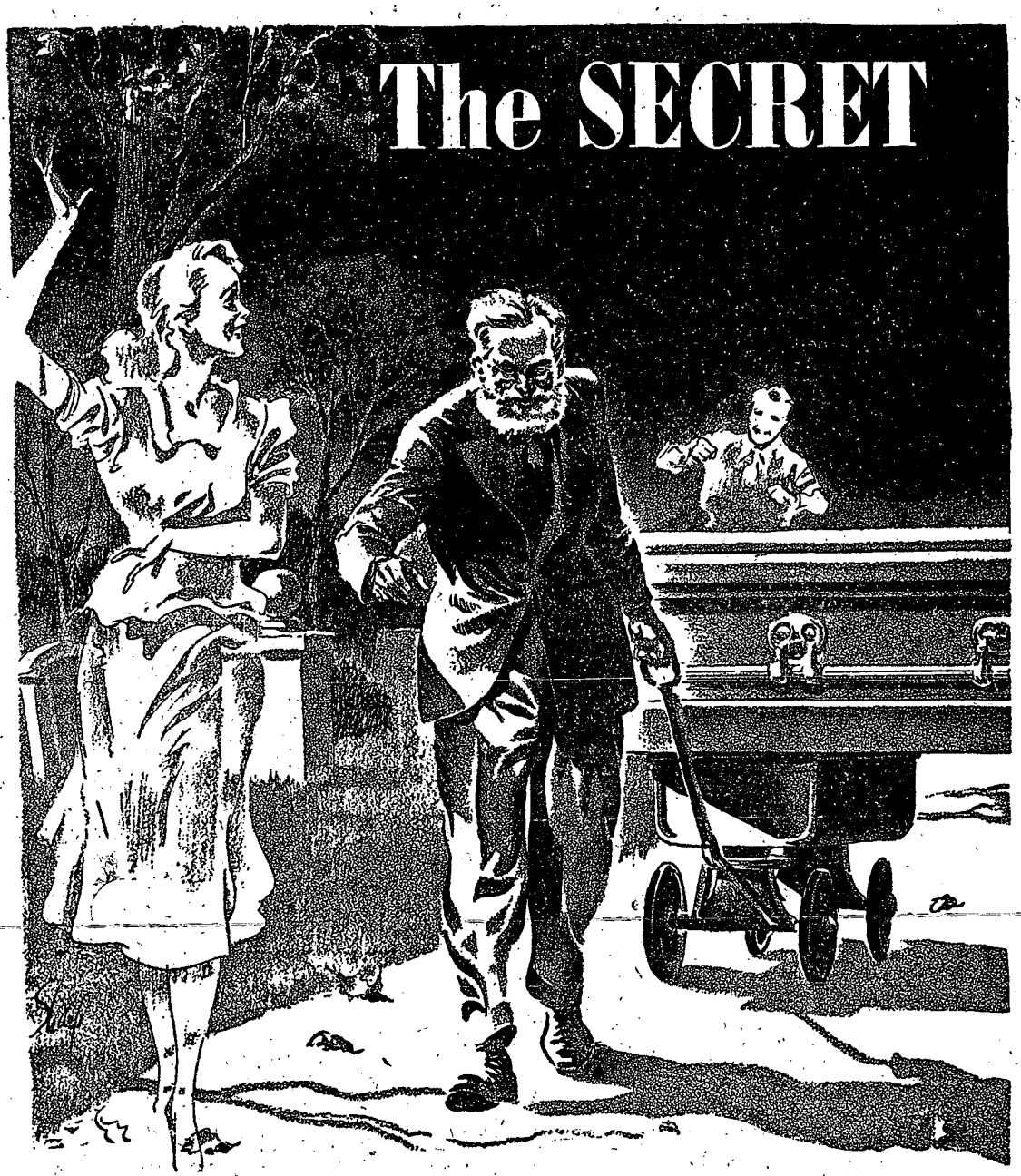

Can the dead be brought back to life? This is the true story of a scientist who believed it could be done—and did it! . . .

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# of ELENA'S TOMB

by KARL TANZLER VON COSEL

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PREFACE

When in November, 1940, I was finally released from prison, I was a very bitter man. Charges had been brought against me that I was a violator of the grave, a ghoul, a fiend of society. There was an avalanche of misrepresentations, of sensational press stories which accused me of being a sexual pervert, a necromancer, a maniac, while being confined for court hearing. Worst of all they had removed Elena's body, that body which I had treated, first to preserve it in its unearthly beauty, and then to reunite with its soul which always was with me in the scientific efforts of over seven years. What made these misfortunes even heavier was the fact that, at the time of my release, I was sixty-four years old, and had lost my employment through Roosevelt's retrenchment, had lost my home on the beach of Florida, which had been destroyed by hoodlums before my captivity and with the war restrictions, found myself almost without means of existence.

With my whole life thus deranged, I lived for a time as a recluse amongst the rubble of my laboratory, using the airplane, which I had built for Elena, as a shelter. But then a strange and unexpected turn of affairs brought me back to life. I discovered that there was human decency left in this world. From all parts of America and even from foreign countries hundreds of letters poured in and thousands of visitors came to see me, not from idle curiosity, but from humane sympathy. In their eyes I had not committed a crime. Gradually faith recovered and hope returned into my heart. I decided that it was my duty to answer comprehensively those thousands of questions I had been asked in connection with my life, and my love for Elena. I decided also that it was my duty to clear myself in the eyes of the public of the false accusations which had been raised. In short, I found it necessary to tell my story, to remove this spectre of ignorance.

So in the cabin of Elena's airship, where her coffin had rested for so long, I sat down and wrote this account. My position was cramped in the pilot seat and made all the more uncomfortable, because war regulations made it necessary to remove the wheels from the plane, so that my quarters were not only extremely narrow but slanting backward. I am no professional writer; I am not a poet; but I have a little gift of painting, and so I have tried to express in pictures what I could not say in words. In this manner, happiness of a kind came back to me; my life again has a purpose; although it is sad that these pictures (seen by visitors at my place) cannot be reproduced in this magazine.

Admittedly my experiments in resurrecting Elena were partly successful. Too often my work was interrupted and disturbed by outside circumstances beyond my control. But I am not giving up. I feel that the invaluable experience already gained lends itself as a reassurance that new experiments could be crowned with success. Elena's body, true enough, is now interred, but her dying wish that she and I should live together has been granted to both of us. She is with me as I write this, she advises me, in fact, it is her hand which, I feel, is leading my pen.

So then, I wish to thank, through this account, all those thousands of kind-hearted and big-hearted friends who have come to my support in my hour of need. It was their faith in me which has restored me to new life; it is to

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them I dedicate this book, and to my Elena, as she was the first who visited me while in jail.

Karl Tanzler von Cosel
Key West, Florida,
In the winter of 1940-41.

CHAPTER I

The Ghost of Castle Cosel

I WAS born in Dresden, Germany, in the town house of our family, called the "Castle," but there was another castle, the Villa Cosel, out in the country and it was there I grew up. This latter manor had the reputation to be a haunted house and the White Woman, whom my mother told me had appeared from time to time during the past two centuries, was supposed to be my ancestor, the Countess Cosel, who died in 1765. Hers is quite a romantic history; moreover, since her apparition to me was the beginning of my relationship to Elena, I will briefly narrate her story:

In the Rococo age, when August the Strong (who became King of Poland) ruled over Saxony, the young Countess Cosel was one of the most celebrated beauties in this notoriously licentious court. She actually was the King's bride, as recorded. Family documents seem to prove that she was engaged to marry the young king. At the very height of her beauty and at the point of becoming a queen she fell in disfavor through the machination of some Polish Countess for reason of jealousy. August the Strong exiled my ancestor from his court and made her a captive for life at the gloomy fortress of Stolpen because she refused to return the certificate. For almost half a century she lived there in solitude which toward the end of her life impaired her sanity. For decades, however, she was able to find a new interest in life through the pursuit of alchemy, the hobby of the learned and the noble in those times. As a young man I went to see the Fortress of Stolpen (once headquarters of Napoleon) where the living quarters and the laboratory equipment of my ancestor were well preserved. Being a chemist and physicist myself, I can witness to the fact that she must have conducted her experiments with great intelligence even if her quest for the Stone of the Wise was vain. Family tradition has it that her knowledge in chemistry enabled her to ward off several attempts on her life through poisoning.

As a young boy, however, I had no interest in the family tree and the existence of a ghost in the manor was never mentioned to me, nor entertained. True enough, at the age of twelve I had a dream, or rather a vision, of a very beautiful girl in a white dress, reclining on a rococo settee, which I painted on a piece of paper then. My boyish interests were, however, entirely concentrated on electricity, on chemical experiments and on flying machines, astronomy, in fact on all phenomena of the universe.

While still at high school, fascinated by the saga of the Flying Valkyries, I built myself a glider plane. I tested this contraption from a hill in the park, but then the giggling of the maids embarrassed me so that I continued flying experiments only after midnight to the alarm of the superstitious dogs of the peasantry.

Likewise, by the time I went to college, I had established in the Green Room of the manor a fairly big laboratory for high-voltage electricity. The garden hall I had converted into a workshop wherein I built one boat and two hot-air balloons made from Japanese silk which it took my mother and a needlewoman months to sew together.

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I had no interests outside science, music and paintings; girls did not exist for me, except formally, even as I went to University at Leipzig and I did neither smoke nor drink. Time seemed too precious to me for such pursuits of a momentary happiness. Engrossed in science after science I took, at the age of twenty-four, final degrees as master of arts in medicine, in philosophy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, etc., having passed nine different examinations beside the S.M.

I WAS sitting in my chair in the Green Room; piled on the large round table were writing materials from the college, books and laboratory instruments. Over the table there was hung a heavy kerosene lamp with a green shade which cast a bright light. There were outlined the static machines and all the other equipment. Toward the back the room was divided by a large curtain which enclosed my photographic darkroom wherein I used to develop the X-ray pictures I made. All was bright behind that curtain which I wanted to be very dark. To complete the picture; all doors, of which the Green Room had several, were locked, except the door to the adjoining music hall, which was furnished splendidly with a Lipp piano, an organ, chairs, chaise-lounge, settees, florentine table, life-size Venus de Milo and an easel on which there stood a picture I once painted of Judith, the beautiful Jewess who slew Holofernes. Besides there were several large oil paintings of Italian masters in gold frames hanging on walls, also 10-feet high mirrors and armor.

The hour was late, about eleven I should say; I felt tired but my day's work was not yet finished. Suddenly, without looking up from my papers, I noticed a movement near my side. It was a pencil lying on the table; it moved slowly half across the table. As I looked at it straight it stopped moving but the moment I turned my eyes back to work, I noticed from the corner of my eyes how it started again. Scientific training had taught me the first law in the observance of phenomena; don't change any of the existing conditions. This, however, does not apply here. I merely paid little attention to it and kept bent on my work. Then it lifted itself off the table, performing a few somersaults in the air and flying down to the floor. Now a match box started walking about the table, lifting itself, gyrating in the air; suddenly it went sailing to the floor also. Then there followed my books, a fact which was all the more ironical to me because these scientific books contained the laws of nature in which I implicitly believed. Yet, these venerable books took to the air, lifted by some unknown force, and crashed to the floor. The instruments on the table followed, one by one, except the few which were screwed to the table. My amazement I cannot even try to describe. Finally the entire heavy, oaken table with the papers in my immediate reach still on it, lifted itself off the floor and floated upward as if carried by water. I was forced to get off my chair and retreat a little for safety. The table weighed more than two hundred pounds and I was afraid to get crushed if it came down. Up and up the table sailed, almost touching the kerosene lamp at the ceiling, and then it came swaying down, slow at first, but then with a crash which made the floor reverberate. I had retreated to the neighborhood of the large curtain which screened my darkroom. I almost touched the curtain, when suddenly flames flared up and came running along the curtain surface, gaining in intensity. Still more curious than

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frightened I moved away and noticed how the flames crept to the ceiling and then went out. Yet, there was no smoke, but there was a smell of burn, and as my fingers probed the curtain surface they were darkened by ashes.

I STILL tried desperately to find some reasonable explanation—the nearest match box was at least six feet away and it was closed—when another uncanny phenomenon manifested itself. There was a noise like the report of a gun from the direction of my static electricity machine. Walking over, to see what had happened, I found that all of the four huge central glass disks had been broken right through the middle. The outside glass plates of the glass case still were intact and so were the condensers. The damage made me really angry, the expensive machine was now quite useless. After a few minutes of gazing at it I heard footsteps coming through the adjoining music hall. I fixed my eyes to the door, wondering whether it could possibly be my mother because *she only* had a key to my door, when suddenly the door opened into the darkened room and to my utter surprise I found that my easel had just been overturned and the picture I had painted of Judith was lying on the floor with the glass splintered. And also the picture itself torn across the face through the middle.

I was not frightened or anything like that, I still believed in some kind of a prank or maybe that there was a thief or prowler in the house. My next step was to test all doors and windows which I found securely locked, and to search every nook and corner for a possible intruder. From the top drawer of my desk I had taken a loaded revolver which I always kept there. While still searching the bedroom I heard a renewed noise in the Green Room, and in returning there my eyes met the strangest sight:

All the chairs in the room had a lively time moving and poltering about, agitated by an invisible agency. No harm was done and the sight was even funny. I realized that in the face of the supernatural I was rather a ridiculous figure, standing there, revolver in hand. So I put the revolver back into the drawer, sure by now that this was no man-made trick. But then the harmless dance of the furniture turned into something more malignant: I heard another crash, this time from inside the cabinet and as I opened its door, I found one of my mercury pumps, which I kept there, smashed, its fifty pounds of mercury running over the floor on which the splinters of glass floated. This was another heavy damage, running into hundreds of dollars, so my anger was aroused. "If this is, by any chance, the spirit of the Countess Anna who perpetrates all this, please give me a prompt answer."

I had hardly finished this sentence when my second mercury pump, fastened as it was to the wall, came crashing down to my feet, spilling also its contents all over the floor. "What is the idea of all this destruction? Why don't you tell me in a more civil way?" I exclaimed. After that everything was still. Nothing moved. It was as if the spirit or whatever it was, had understood. I looked at my watch; it was two minutes past midnight. Feeling that the demonstration was over and that there was nothing I could do for the present, I retired to bed, because everything was silent as the grave.

UPSTAIRS in the dining room at breakfast next morning I told Mother about my nocturnal adventures, and it was then that she told me the Green Room was supposed to be

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haunted for ages. Mother was as little frightened of the ghost as I myself, but I found her very much interested. In fact, she asked me to install an electric bell which would connect her bedroom with my study, so I could call her immediately if the apparition should appear again. She declared she had heard some crashes last night and had felt the floor tremble at one time. The next night I invited several guests, all professors and doctors of Leipzig and Dresden,* in the Green Room. One doctor came later bringing his wife, who was a good medium, but nothing happened except this lady, in virtually one minute was driven out by an invisible agency and had to be taken away at once. Otherwise nothing happened, so that the gentlemen departed.

In the third night, however, I was mysteriously awakened at around 2 a. m. I hardly believed my eyes. There were, however, standing by my bed two women, one bending over my face, a tall lady with snow-white hair, a striking likeness to the portrait of the Countess Anna which I remembered so well. The second figure kept somewhat behind her, as if trying to hide, and the Countess held the reluctant younger lady by the hand. Bending still lower and staring at me, the Countess Anna addressed me as follows:

"I've been trying to attract your attention for quite some time, my boy. But you wouldn't take note. You were too much engrossed in your experiments. That's why I had to use some violence. Now take warning, do not entangle yourself with the woman represented on the Judith picture. Don't get ensnared by her. She isn't the one who is destined for you. Look here, Carl, I have brought you the bride whom some day you will meet."

I tried to answer something but I could not speak. I had plenty of words, but I could not open my jaws. The Countess now stepped a little aside and at the same time she drew her companion nearer to me. For a very brief moment the veil parted from the shrouded figure's face. Spellbound I saw, framed in long, dark, black tresses, a young girl's face, so beautiful I can't attempt to describe it. For a fleeting second I saw the girl smile at me; a wonderful smile, but at that moment the Countess Anna detached herself from my arm which she had touched and the apparition quite suddenly disappeared.

Strange as this may seem, I was in no way over-excited. It all seemed very natural, if very wonderful, to me. With a feeling of relief and quiet happiness I just noted the time on my clock—two o'clock—and then fell back into sound sleep.

This then was the manner in which what most people would call the supernatural, entered into my life. I did not know at the time that this experience was to be formative for the whole rest of my life. My personal reaction to the experience was wholly scientific. Deny the apparition I could not. Rational explanation I had none. Determined to find a rational explanation, if I could, I started studying the metaphysical classics, in which, until then, I had not interested myself, and the more psychological and spiritist literature. This, however, I found to be of little help; it became increasingly clear that I had to navigate my own course into this vast, unexplored sea, though *Kiesewetter and DuPrel's Metaphysik* gave me a good foundation which is a necessity and safe guide in this field of ethereal phenomena.

* Doctors Zöllner, Kiesewetter, Du Prel, Töpler, Hallwachs, Slude, Freudenberg, Berthclen, v. Schurtz, v. Englehart—all real German scientists and medicos—Author.

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ONE of my first steps was to visit again the Fortress of Stolpen where my ancestor had been confined. In the wing of the fortress chapel I found, under the rubble, a small square stone which may have been from the grave. Ivy had grown on the spot, a vine of which I had put into my pocket, as I dug into the stone rubble supposed to be her grave. On my return home I found this vine and planted it underneath the window of my study over the entrance of a subterranean tunnel. In my writing desk I also placed a piece of bone and a few splinters of wood which came from this grave of my ancestor. The vine grew fast and it gave me a strange feeling to picture it some day framing my window when I would look up from my work.

CHAPTER II

Ulysses in Search of Elena

I BEING a bachelor, set out on an Odyssey, supposed to end toward the Pacific, which in the course of many years led from continent to continent all over the world. I can refer to these years in only the sketchiest manner in this magazine account because all which matters is what leads up to my final meeting with the apparition of the castle.

As I went abroad a decade before the outbreak of the first World War, I was led by some strange, irrepressible urge to the East. That there might be some higher purpose, some wise guiding hand in my travels, dawned upon me first on a certain date, when I went to visit the famous Campo Santo, that gorgeous paradise of a cemetery behind the city of Genoa.

There, all of a sudden, I found myself in front of an exquisite marble statue of an extremely beautiful girl, and was frozen in my steps because there was the most striking resemblance to the apparition of my promised bride. "Why, here she is in stone," I said to myself. "How very strange. Why could not God grant it to me that I should meet her in the flesh instead? Why is it that I must find her only as an effigy standing on a grave?"

I was moved deeply because of its minutely executed life-like resemblance. As I stood there I felt tears welling up in my eyes, a fact which embarrassed me because there were so many visitors around. But obviously all those sightseers were under the impression that I was a mourner, as indeed I was, and nobody paid any attention to me. Thus I stood in front of the statue for quite some time; all I could learn was that this beautiful girl had died at the age of 22, and that her name had been Elena. As if under a spell I kept repeating that name, "Elena, Elena." And it was then that all of a sudden the figure of a live girl in the same white dress seemed to detach itself from the statue and slowly walk past where I stood, looking at me. There was no doubt in my mind that she was indeed the apparition of my youthful days and that she was alive. Automatically I took off my hat to greet her like an old acquaintance. Her eyes met mine, her lips parted in a gracious smile, and eager as I was to greet her, my lips spoke: "Good morning, my lady." Meanwhile the girl kept on walking slowly away from me and disappeared among the mourners in the maze of statuary. Only then did I regain power over my limbs and immediately I started in pursuit as I did not want to lose her. Racing up and down, through all the innumerable alleys of the vast cemetery, I searched for her everywhere, breaking through the throngs of visitors and stopping every one of the uniformed guards whom I

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met. "Haven't you seen a young lady in white? I've lost her; I've got to find her again."

Darkness fell, the bells rang, the visitors departed, the gates of the cemetery were closed and I was still despairingly seeking for the girl of my dreams, mysteriously come to life and mysteriously disappeared again. The carabinieri of course believed my story; after all it happened often that visitors got lost in this jungle of statuary. They advised me to wait outside, while they themselves looked around everywhere. Finally I was told definitely that no young lady in white was to be found anywhere.

So that was how I found and lost my Elena the second time.

A LITTLE later, after Mass in St. Peter's, I went along the Via Appia and in the Catacombs of Rome I found myself by the grave of Saint Cecilia. She happens to be my mother's patron saint and Mother had told me that Saint Cecilia was my guardian angel who had dropped my cradle full of roses. So that was why I put a bunch of roses at her feet and I knelt to pray.

According to the Roman history of the early Christians in the time of Nero: The dead were considered as still belonging to the society of the living, not as dead, only as asleep (like also in Germany in some parts); in Latin they were called *accersitus* which means called away.

After many travels in many a land I finally settled down after a fashion in Sydney, Australia, thirteen years before the outbreak of the first World War. There I was employed by the Australian Government as a civil electrical engineer and X-Ray expert. I had become a British citizen. I had a good salary and a pleasant home overlooking Darling Point. In the quiet harbor, right in front of my doorstep, there was anchored the big one hundred and ten foot power boat, a former torpedo boat I had rebuilt for myself and which I intended to use for deep sea exploration and for fishing expeditions which often lead me far into the South Sea archipelagoes. In these, my pleasant bachelor quarters, and in the night of the second of May, 1910, I felt myself mysteriously awakened as if raised from the dead by a living hand. My first idea was that there must be a burglar in the house and for a moment I wondered why my dog did not bark, until now fully awake I remembered that my dog had been poisoned a few days ago. Now all the more suspicious, and connecting the death of the dog with some plan for burglary, being awake, listening, I heard distinctly footsteps coming to my house, halting at my door. Then I heard a key being inserted in my doorlock, the door opened and snapped back closed. Two night lights were burning as usual in my bedroom and hall. Presently I saw a shadow moving slowly from behind the wall. It appeared to be a woman's figure, head and shoulders shrouded by a black headpiece like a lady looking halfway from the doorpost. Still thinking that the veil might be a burglar's trick, I sat up in bed under the mosquito netting. Then when the figure was retreating back behind the doorpost, both my night lights were blown out as if by a shot. This could not have been through any movement of the air, neither caused by myself or anybody else, because my lights were in separate rooms, eternal room lights under glass and entirely windproof. In darkness now, I reached for my revolver on my right side, cocked it and listened sharp for any sound of approach while sitting very still until the rising light of morning showed sufficient outlines to see I was alone in my room, then I

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stepped out of bed. I went out to the terrace and around the house. I made a very thorough search but found everything in order, so that I decided that some kind of spook had entered my life again. This time I didn't like the prankish way in which it had extinguished my lights. In fact, the engineer in me protested against the unreasonableness of these manifestations. Cursing under my breath I went to my daily routine as it was now daylight.

FOR more than twenty months nothing happened except real burglary attempt, but in the evening of March 7, 1912, the real ghost returned, and this time to stay, when I was peacefully sitting at dinner in the early evening. For the last hour a storm was blowing outside, the galvanized roof of my house rattled with a deafening noise and through the windows in the fading light I watched the roaring breakers pounding against my bathhouse, and my boat riding at anchor, shuddering from the impact of the sea, lifting itself to every wave like a reeling horse. Otherwise in my house everything was as peaceful as could be, tea on the table and scrambled eggs, hot toast, cookies, bananas and meat, but no wine or whisky, a well satisfied bachelor, all by himself.

It was exactly seven p.m., when all of a sudden there was an end of the roar of storm and sea, glancing across the table I noticed a white-veiled form standing on the threshold of my door, facing me. With my mouth still full of food I continued eating, too amazed to do anything else. At first I thought my eyes deceived me but the apparition stood there all right; after looking a second and third time there could be no doubt about its reality. It was a woman, about my own size, and I noted the rich, black hair unrolling over her shoulders, showing through the veils, so long it reached down to her knees. Even through the veil I could see dark eyes which fixedly stared at me; I also noticed that the light from out in the hall faintly showed through her form. A tremble of supreme joy and anxiety shook my frame. There she was at last, the apparition of Castle Cosel, my promised bride.

By the automatism of habit, I arose from my chair, addressed the lady with the conventional words "What can I do for you, my lady? What message may you have for me?"

She did not answer but her beautiful face turned into smiles, the most heavenly I had ever seen. Still frozen to the threshold she stretched out both her hands to me, in friendly gesture like a child. As I walked across the room to meet those arms, I felt my hair raising and cold shivers running down my spine, the closer I approached her, and then I felt her arms closing around me and felt my arms embracing her. I cannot possibly describe the upsurge of a divine happiness such as I had never experienced before. There was a melting together in divine bliss. Her wonderful dark tresses, fragrant and caressing, covered us both. There were no longer any chills, only elation and warmth, filling my entire body. It was as if my feet went off the ground and she and I were floating in space. The intensity of this rapture was almost more than human nature could bear, yet I would have loved nothing better than to stay in this embrace forever; only at this very culmination of my happiness some substance evaporated. The body of the girl dissolved in my arms. I still could feel her gown and still could smell the fragrance of her hair playing around my head and body, but with the gradual disappearance of her form my arms fell limp and fear gripped my heart that perhaps I had

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lost her again, that perhaps she had sacrificed the very substance of her being, poured it all out into this one embrace.

Struck with the horror that perhaps it was I who had destroyed her in my arms, I stepped forward out of the room into the large hall and to my great relief I noticed that she had not disappeared, but her body reformed again. Only now she no longer stood in front of me but by my side, and as I moved she moved with me. Her feet, I noticed, did not touch the ground; neither did mine. With utmost caution I moved step by step and as I slowly walked around inside the house she went with me until we had returned to the door of the dining room, which also served me as organ room. Here her form detached itself from my body and now stood again on the threshold in the same attitude of a sentry as I had seen her the first time. For some unknown reason she did not enter this room.

She smiled and seemed at peace. It was as if I addressed an angel who was forbidden to speak but understood all I spoke in any language in my strange attempts to evoke some kind of a response. Now this might sound silly, but it all served me as an exploration of her human abilities so I offered her to share my food, invited her to a seat at my table. I thought perhaps the offer of a cup of tea might tempt her, or that some small talk about my faraway relatives may bring an answer. I asked her permission to clear the table, and she seemed to understand. Having set my house in order, I found her still standing there. I made a gesture as if I were about to retire into my bedroom. She followed me to the bedroom and there she stood immobile on my threshold like a sentry or a guardian angel till dawn came. Then she followed me back to the hall where I went into my ——— and finally back to the organ room which she did not enter but stayed on the threshold.

There followed the strangest week I've ever lived in life. I had the very strong impression that the ghost wanted me to go along with my regular work and ordinary pursuits. So that I went to work and when I returned, I found her waiting for me inside the entrance to the hall. She seemed to be glad to see me back because from the moment I entered the house she followed me around from the hall to the bathroom, from the dining room to the kitchen. Only when I went to sleep she stood near my bed all night. I could see her standing beside my eternal lamps exactly as when she first had come. Although she never spoke, she most always pleasantly smiled, and she seemed devoted to me, which made me indescribably happy. There was an incorporeal love between us which approached the divine. On the seventh day she left while I was in town and I felt her departure on my way home.

There was no explanation for her going, as little as there had been for her coming. All I knew was that she took my life with her, that wherever she went she and I would be united, and that she was indeed my promised bride. As she did not speak and tell me her name, I called her Ayesha, owing to her veiled garments of an Eastern Vesta Priestess and her spirit power.

I have no words to describe my sorrow over her loss; may it suffice to say that mental depression brought my health to a very low state, so that a fortnight thereafter I found myself in a hospital and remained there for more than three months, unconscious most of the time, under a combined attack of typhoid and malaria fever.

Finally convalescent, Dr. Breitner, the chief surgeon, handed me a bunch

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of letters which I had been unable to read in my illness. The first one I opened brought me the news that my father had fallen in a death coma on March 7, 1912, at 7 p.m., at the exact hour when the ghost had appeared in my house, and that my father awoke every day again at 7 p.m. until finally he had died on March 10th at 7 p.m., which was the exact hour when the ghost had left me.

In 1914 the First World War broke out and although I had become a British subject in the King's service, was in good standing with the community and employed by the government, the British saw fit to put me "for my own protection" into an internment camp.

I WILL not detail the next four years in the Trial Bay concentration camp, since this was covered by an article in the Rosicrucian Digest, beyond the mention of the fact that I spent a great deal of the time in constructing a pipe organ from sea-coast debris, with the help of some Buddhist priests also confined there. When the armistice was signed, the organ went with me in the ship, which sailed continually through storms. I feared for the organ, my most valued possession, but the ship did not sink, and in due course arrived at Dover from where we Germans were then trans-shipped to Rotterdam, two years after the armistice. I arrived still with my organ, at the old manor house in Saxony. During the fifteen years of my travels Father had died and one of my two sisters had married in America. Only Mother, now very old, and my youngest sister, welcomed me home.

When I was still in the concentration camp I had fancied, like most of the others that it would be possible to pick up the threads of the old life after the war. Reality, of course, was different. I was working on some new inventions, worked out while in the prison camp, but found they could not be used owing to war restrictions. Most of the old professors from my student days had died; the intellectual life at the universities which once I had cherished so much I found to be in a state of depression. The whole country bore the stamp of defeat, I felt as if I were a burden to the meagre resources of the family estates which were barely sufficient for Mother and sister. With my newly acquired patents of inventions, and *Reichs entechädigung* I decided to accept my mother's wish to go to America to my sister.

Because my sister lived with her husband near Tampa, Florida I chose the route by way of Havana, Cuba; on February 6, 1926 my ship, the Holland-American liner Edam, sailed from Rotterdam. The organ I built in Australia was to be a present for Mother, but then before I departed for America Mother herself insisted that I should take the organ with me in her memory.

The voyage to Havana was uneventful; I kept pretty much to myself and felt more attracted toward the Spanish passengers we had because they were a more happy lot of people. On February 27th our ship entered the beautiful harbor, gliding past the old Morro Castle; I received my landing papers, went ashore and found by sheer good luck a very pleasant and inexpensive hotel room somewhere up town.

It was the time of the Carnival and all of Havana seemed to be intoxicated with the carnival spirit. I had ever seen anything like it; originally my plans had been to take the ferry to Key West the very next morning. As it was I stayed four days, not to amuse myself but held to the spot by some strange, irrational hope that I could find my lost bride in this carnival crowd.

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This was probably because there were so many beautiful ladies of the Spanish type who somehow resembled her, and because in this carnival time so many of them wore veils, and fairy-like dresses which made the similarity still more possible. As if I were a Spanish or a South American gentleman myself, I spent many hours on the Promenade where the band played against the thunder of the surf and against the mad rush of the big, open cars in which the Beauty Queens of Havana came sailing by, in endless procession. To stand there on the sidewalk was like sitting in a tremendous open air opera house and to watch some wonderful circus perform. But, looking everywhere and always expectant of midnight when the veils of all these beautiful girls fell I never met with my loved one. The feeling persisted that she must be somewhere, and I went back to my room when squads of little negroes started to sweep the streets from the refuse of the night's revelry, rolling up giant six-foot balls of paper like snowballs in rainbow colors into the side alleys.

On March 1, 1926 I made up my mind that she was not amongst the ladies of the Carnival and that I would better seek my relatives in Florida. So I took the ferry to Key West. Disembarkation went without difficulty, but the telegram I had sent to my relatives had somehow failed to reach them. There was nobody to meet me and as the last train had already left I walked that night twelve miles under a beautiful moon along the railroad tracks. It was a strange sensation to be all alone in a new country where everything was strange to me and all the more mysterious, under the moon. Florida I thought was not as beautiful as Cuba; in the course of the next year I even tried several times to get away from there and back to Cuba. Each time, however, I felt myself drawn back to Florida by some mysterious force, the cause of which I was to learn in 1930.

CHAPTER III

The Battle for Life

DURING my first years in Florida I had bought myself a piece of land, had fenced it in, and built a road across the land, and even laid the foundation for a house. The Florida boom, however, was quickly followed by a crash and it became necessary for me to earn a living by using my old faculties as a scientist. The Marine Hospital at Key West employed me as a pathologist and x-ray specialist; I built up a fairly well equipped x-ray department and peace of mind in scientific work until that fateful day of April 22, 1930.

In the middle of my routine work I received a call from the head office to go and take a blood test from a young senorita who as an outpatient had come for examination. I hardly looked at the patient as I entered the room. The first thing I noticed of her personality as I bent down to take a drop of blood from one of her finger tips, rather than one of her ears which were too exquisitely lovely to mar, was that her hand was unusually small; its long, tapering fingers, the loveliest I had ever seen. As the needle struck, the hand twitched a little and it was then that from my kneeling position I raised my head for the first time to say,

"I'm very sorry to have caused you pain; forgive me, please."

Her face had been hidden by her hand, so that I had hardly seen it as I first entered the room. But now she withdrew her hand to answer me and I looked into a face of unearthly beauty, the face of my dreams and visions—the face of the bride which had been

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promised to me by my ancestor forty years before.

I was so thunderstruck I hardly heard her saying:

"It didn't hurt much. Excuse my nervousness." Her voice was soft and sweet and child-like. It reminded me of a mocking bird's song in spring. She spoke with a Spanish accent, yet her English was cultured and quite good.

Having performed the duty for which I had been called, I had no excuse to stay any longer in the room. Feeling very shaky, I arose and much too confused to say anything I merely bowed myself out, not knowing whether I was walking or dreaming. Back in my lab, I sat for quite a while lost in the memory of the apparition in the old castle, and in the Campo Santa, and above all my seven days with her in Sydney, Australia at the time of my father's death. Yes it was she whom at last I found in the flesh, and for proof that she really was alive I held in hand the little glass tube with a drop of her red blood. A nurse brought me the record sheet for me to enter the results of my test. There was nothing much the matter with her blood but it gave me a shock to read on the top of the record sheet the "Mrs." before the name Elena Hoyos. So she belonged to somebody else. Was there a curse upon me that after this search of four decades had come to an end I should lose her again at the very moment I had finally discovered her, my promised bride?

Even so I felt indescribably happy. What, after all, did it matter if she belonged to another; hadn't I also belonged to another years ago? Our relationship had never been of an earthly nature. Over all these years what was there in a husband's name or even in a husband's existence? All this had very little to do with me and Elena. The main thing was that I had found her and that she was ill and that I was best qualified and in a position to help her.

I SAW her the very next day, when she came in for more tests and this time I took a radiograph of her lungs which brought me the painful revelation that she was suffering from tuberculosis. From the frailty of her figure, from the listlessness with which she sat, I had suspected that much the very first day. The certainty which now was gained increased my worries because our hospital was not adequately equipped for the treatment of lung t.b., yet some way had to be found to help her; a fierce determination to aid her, to bring her back to health was burning in my soul.

Both Elena and her mother could not fail to observe my deep interest in her case. They invited me to the family home and, needless to say, I went there that very evening.

It was a very small and rather dilapidated house to which I came; the family was poor. Elena's father worked in a tobacco factory. There were two sisters, all very different from Elena. Her mother, a good-hearted, if simple woman, and numbers of young people in all ages, whose relationship to the family I could never quite ascertain.

Elena, sitting very quietly, and obviously feeling far from well, in a chair in the kitchen, shone like the sun amongst all these lesser human stars. She and everybody else received me with great kindness and, best of all, the husband whom I had expected to find wasn't there. As the family secret was soon revealed to me, Elena and her husband had separated, as he had been responsible for her suffering. It was probably only human that this fact filled my heart with joy. Also it filled me with deep pity when tears welled

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up in the beautiful eyes of my Elena and she pointed to a car as it passed by the house.

"There he goes, he who was my husband. He now lives with another girl."

Impulsively I took her hand between mine and said,

"Don't worry over it, and don't worry about anything any more; from now on I am going to take care of you." She thanked me with a happy little smile and like a child she said:

"Yes, doctor, I'm sure you will."

Days later I went again to her house, in order to take a blood-test. This time I was led by her mother into her room. There, to my utter surprise and joy, I discovered hanging over her bed a picture of Saint Cecelia playing the organ, the same Saint Cecelia to whom I had brought roses in the Catacombs of Rome. Still treating me as if I were a teacher, which I indeed was, and she my little pupil, Elena said:

"That's Saint Cecelia, sir."

"Yes, and you know, Elena, she is my guardian angel, and this is the first time that I've seen her picture here in America."

"We too," said Elena, "are not Americans. We came from Cuba several years ago."

As in a blinding revelation I now had the explanation for the spell under which I had watched the Carnival in Havana four years ago and I also had won the certainty that it was my guardian angel, Saint Cecelia, who had brought me and Elena together.

ALL this great inner happiness, notwithstanding, my worries as a doctor mounted steadily. Since our hospital lacked the equipment I wished to use for Elena and moreover I considered the Florida climate as unfavorable for her condition, I proposed to send her at my own expense, of course, to some famous t.b. institution abroad where I was reasonably certain that she would be cured. This offer she refused because, in the first place, with the euphoria so typical with t.b. patients, she did not realize at all the seriousness of her condition. This left me only one choice; I had to procure at least the electrical equipment to treat her right on the spot. I wrote to several firms for the necessary apparatus and some of it I started building myself.

In the meantime I decided to give her radiation therapy with the hospital equipment, although the service outfit was not powerful enough for deep radiation therapy. Whatever was left of my spare time I spent on the completion of an airplane I had started to construct some time ago. Once Elena had regained her health this plane was to take the two of us to a South Sea island which I had discovered for myself during one of my fishing expeditions in Australia. This was a little paradise and my dream was that Elena and I should spend our honeymoon there. Every time she came to the hospital for treatment we took time out to inspect the plane together. Those were moments of great delight for both of us, when we sat side by side in the little pilot's cabin and imagined how it would be when it carried us into the air and across the ocean.

"What name are you going to give to the ship?" she asked.

"I wish you would permit me to name our ship La Condesa de Cosel."

Elena blushed, for this was the first time I had intimated my wish to marry her.

"All right," she said, "let's name her 'Contesa Elena.'"

Her twenty-first birthday approached; I had high hopes now that she would accept me as her suitor, as

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she had allowed me to buy the ring. I brought it over that day, hidden in a big bouquet of roses. I also brought cakes and wine and we had a wonderful day together, all the more so because nobody else seemed to have remembered the birthday of my Elena.

Next in importance to the ray-treatment was to build up her physical strength. Every day now I brought her fruit and some of the finest medicinal wine I could procure; I even went to the priest, because he was able to get the kind of wine for me which I wanted for my sick Elena.

With these combined means the tubercular infiltration for the time was checked, even with the minor equipment of the hospital, and Elena's general condition was improving. In fact, she told me that she didn't really believe that she was sick at all. I cautioned her as best as I could, but unfortunately her family, too, arrived at the wrong conclusion that their daughter was now cured and that my continuation of the treatment was more or less a pretext to be as much as possible with Elena. To disprove this, one day I showed her my microscope and I showed her view slides with the little red rods of the bacilli. Naively, as a child, Elena fancied that I had painted those red rods on the glass. There was no use arguing because the poor child was enjoying a sensation of well-being, a result of the healing hormones which were stimulated by the x-ray treatment of the tissues. Not for anything in the world would I have robbed her of her high hopes, certain as I was that these were destined soon to fade again. Elena always undertook more work than she could afford in her condition.

Thus it was one day when the family invited me to the wedding of Elena's sister. When I got there late in the afternoon, the marriage ceremony was long since over, but an enormous party was in full swing. The little house was overcrowded with guests, all eating and drinking, and as the hostess for all these people there acted my Elena. She hardly took time out to take me by the hand to introduce me to the groom and guests, before she carried on carrying the trays around, serving the drinks, operating the gramophone, and doing a thousand other tasks. It was agonizing for me to sit there by the side of the bride, trying to entertain her as best as I could, while, through the clouds of smoke, through the laughter and the gramophone songs, I heard the dry cough of my Elena, who should rest her lungs above all.

THE evening seemed like an eternity. It was near midnight when the guests departed and my exhausted girl sat down for a moment by my side.

"Elena," I said, "I admire you, you are the most wonderful hostess in the world. But this sort of thing just can't go on. Permit me to help you. Let's get married and let's get away from all this."

Before she could answer, her mother, whom I had not seen all evening, stood in front of us:

"No daughter of mine is going to marry an American. It is to be a Cuban, if ever she marries again."

With her head bowed, my Elena sat in silence. I took her hand and all I could say was:

"God bless you, and good night, my Elena."

The next time I went over, I brought her a pearl necklace. I had sent my big radio console to her house, hoping that good music would cheer her up. Whenever I found her in a depressed mood, which was often, I took out of my pockets some new present for her; one day a large pendant of rock crystal,

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the next a pair of earrings and again a beautiful carved rose of pink coral on a gold chain, and almost every day I wrote her letters, wherein medical advice was strangely mixed with my love for her.

My darling Elena:

Please don't deceive yourself that all is well, even if you feel that way, don't throw caution into the wind; your enemy is an invisible one, he can only be seen by trained, scientific eyes, and he can only be fought in a scientific manner. Please, darling, do not listen to irresponsible advice. I know, there are quacks around who are suggesting all kinds of magic cures which have their common source in ignorance. Please, take the medicine I am sending and do come back to the hospital for a new check-up. Dr. Lombard, too, wants to see you. I am working on our airplane in my spare time. It is now nearly completed and the next time you come, I will give you the key for the cabin and we shall officially christen it. And then too, I am already collecting all the things we are going to need on our wedding trip. Silk dresses for you and a bridal gown which is all white silk, and all the rest of your trousseau, even lingerie and silver slippers and last but not least all of your medicines, like chinosol and adrenalin, glucose, beef extract and all the rest of it.

Forever yours,
Carl.

It seemed, however, harder to get Elena to come over to the hospital. One day her excuse was that her father temporarily had no car. I sent a taxi over, still she refused, saying that she didn't trust the taxi company. My own car had just been stolen, so I borrowed another, but even when I came myself to fetch her, Elena would not come to the hospital. It dawned on me that some kind of an opposition had developed against me and the hospital people within her family.

That this was only too true was proved a little later, when again I found the house crowded with young Cubans, even married with happy families, noisy with radio music and full of cigar smoke. I could not help to observe how Elena suffered and it made me mad. I told them they should at least refrain from smoking. This hurt the Spanish pride of her father. The old man made quite a scene about my interfering with his guests:

"My daughter is quite well and if you don't like the smoking, why don't you get out of the house."

That settled things for this time at least. Elena's eyes followed me as I left the house as if to say:

"Suffer it for me."

Not to see her was torture and to be unable to do anything for her was worse. Night after night I dreamed of her, until after a week I got a little not from her:

Key West, September 10, 1930.

Dear Doctor:

I am so very sorry, because I know how unpleasant your last visit to our home must have been. Please, do forgive us, I'm sure father did not really mean what he said to you. He had been on edge all day and had been very cross with everyone. Please, understand that he didn't mean to be that rude. Both, my family and myself, would be only too glad to have you as our guest again. So, please, accept my apology for the other night, you must see us soon.

Your friend,
Elena Hoyos

After that, of course, I could not stay

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away. What did I care after all about what her people said or did. Her life was so much more important than a physician's pride.

Nobody smoked in the house this time. Nobody was there except Elena and her mother. I found my Elena in an appalling condition. She lay in a state of serious convulsions on her bed, trembling and gasping for air. Her mother kept her covered with blankets. Determined to find out what had happened, I insisted on an explanation. The frightened mother finally came out with the truth: Elena had just been brought home from another doctor, who had been giving her injections for the past few weeks.

"What kind of injections?" I asked. "And who is the doctor?" She gave me an empty vial and named the doctor. This is a thing, of course, which many patients do: to go behind the back of one physician to another. This man was not a quack, but since he was not informed of my treatment and had started on a different one, the two of us worked at cross purposes and the harm to the patient was being done.

I GOT immediately in touch with the other doctor and we agreed that the injections should stop. The next test I was now able to make of Elena showed a decided positive albuminaria; her condition had rapidly worsened. It made me almost desperate, this ignorance and underhanded play which had undermined the resistance of my girl. Nor can I approve of medics who keep on pumping drugs into the circulatory system without constantly checking on the actual reactions. It means to work in the dark, besides it interferes with a healthy blood and has an upsetting effect to the curative effort. In this manner my poor Elena was needlessly made to suffer. Almost blindly obedient to her parents, like so many Spanish girls, she had followed their advice, trusting implicitly that it would be for the good. She was a good child, my Elena, too good indeed for these well-meaning but ignorant people who simply had the old superstitious idea, 'the more medicine the better' and 'if one doctor doesn't help, another will'.

Worse even than this outside interference was something which I can hardly call by any other name than a conspiracy not to permit my girl the so much needed rest. Scores of cousins thronged the little house at all hours of the day and night; incessantly the radio blared and some sort of a celebration seemed always to be going on. Instead of enjoying the quiet of a hospital which should have been hers, my Elena was damned to live as if in a railroad station.

For a long time now I had realized that there was only one way to have this radically changed, and that was for me to marry her. Time and again I told her so but she always gave me the same answer:

"But we can't marry, dear, I am not divorced yet, and even if I were divorced, you can't marry a sickly girl, such as me. First let me get well again."

"All right, my darling, I have patience if you have."

With much persuasion I managed to get her once more to the hospital. There I took another series of x-ray pictures which made it absolutely clear that her lungs had worsened. I also took a slow bucky-diaphragm picture of the trunk, including the larynx and thorax cavities. To make the best of it, I simultaneously gave her a good general radiation. Dr. Lombard, who knew of my great interest in Elena, came over and enjoined me in entreating her to come for treatment regularly—to no avail.

Knowing that we would reach this

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impasse I had already prepared to give her high frequency violet-ray treatment in her own house. Since I could not use hospital equipment for the purpose, I had built by my own hands a high voltage transformer for her and had bought another instrument from the Betz Company in Indiana for her use, but when on my next visit I proposed to have this apparatus installed—at my expense, of course — the whole family turned against me. I was bluntly informed that my services were no longer required. I was accused of painting far too black a picture of Elena's health. It was hinted that she was making much better progress with the aid of patent medicines and that all this new-fangled electrical apparatus was devil's work.

That night I returned home a broken man. I had fought with all the persuasion in my power but the wall of faces, which confronted me, had been like a wall of stones.

For the past nine months now I had overworked; my day belonged to the hospital, my evenings to Elena, my nights to work on the airship and on the million-volt transformer for Elena. This last blow, that I should be unable to attend to her, did the rest. I came down with Bright's disease and lay in the hospital for the next six weeks. Dr. Lombard's skill in the end restored my health.

All I could do, while I was helpless, was to dream of Elena and these dreams became more and more frightening.

Once I saw her, very pale and dressed in rags, walking alone behind a high iron fence as if of a penitentiary. I found myself on the other side and cried to her: "Oh, darling, I am so happy I found you at last. Run, darling, run quick, for farther down the iron rails I can see a little opening between the bars, it's just big enough for you to crawl through." She held her arms out as if to embrace me, I could drink one kiss from her lips. Then she started running and came following me along; it seemed like an eternity until we arrived at the place where one of those bars was missing—and there she came out into my arms, kissing me.

When I wrote her about this dream, she instructed her sister to go to the hospital and tell me to dream no more.

On Christmas night 1930 I dreamed I was in mother's home. Suddenly she rose, saying she would just go to the next room and be soon back again. She disappeared into the music hall, which was quite threateningly dark, and all of a sudden the roof collapsed and came thundering down and I saw mother buried under tons of stone and rafters. I rushed to her aid, searched everywhere to find a shovel and nowhere was there a shovel. From this dream I woke up, bathed in cold sweat and with the feeling that my mother was no more, which soon proved true enough when the death notification arrived. I must relate a third dream because of its connection with later events when I took my Elena out of the grave:

I had wandered into the countryside outside Key West and had come to a deep gulch with lots of underbrush on the embankment and water at the bottom. There I saw what looked like a bundle of clothing and discovered that it was a human body with the head buried in the mud. The dress looked familiar and as I quickly slid down the embankment, it really was Elena. I turned her over and her face was covered with blood and mud. I washed it with my handkerchief, always rinsing it in the water. At last her features became clear and I could see that only the bridge of her nose had been broken, but that there still was life in her. I took her into my arms and laid her on the higher ground. There I did every-

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thing to bring her back to life and at the same time to clean her dress. I needed water, so I stepped down again into the gulch and saw all of a sudden, that there were more bodies lying in the muddy stream, men, women and children, but they were all dead and in a bad state of decay. I counted thirty-seven bodies in all. They made my hair stand on end because I thought they must all have been murdered and dumped and hidden here. So I fled and took the unconscious body of Elena in my arms to my laboratory. I had just placed her on the X-ray table to examine her for internal injuries when I woke up.

SO BEGAN the year 1931 with threatening dreams and signs and portents. The invisible was warning me and in my convalescent state I felt forever more deeply depressed. This probably reflects in the notes which I sent Elena:

"Darling, if you have any willpower left, please, use it in the right direction, concentrate everything on your health. Please, do come over for treatment before it is too late.

"Let me see you again, Elena, I implore you. So often you have said that I am too old for you, but listen, darling, I never count my years, neither do I count yours. If you were a mummy, five thousand years old, I would marry you just the same. I swear; it's not for selfish reasons that I want this marriage but because I can do so much more than a boy your age. I can offer you my science, my experience, my capacity to save your life and this apart and on top of my undying love. You want to get well, don't you, and you want to see the world, don't you? You wouldn't imagine that this little Key West is the world, or that the life you are leading is anything like life could be. Oh, darling, I would take you to my South Sea Island or to the big cities of Europe or wherever you want to go. Only do come and let me care for you again.

"Darling, I've seen a girl dying in her home yesterday. Now I can't rest, I must tell you that she died from the same disease you have, because she was already beyond help when she came from Habana Hospital, let not this happen to you, you have every right and every faculty to get well again. Let me implore you, take warning, please, do cooperate with us and do not waste away this precious time."

On February 2nd, 1931, to my indescribable joy Elena came to see me. She had put on her very best dress and she had cut off her beautiful long tresses and now wore her hair coiffured in the American style. Her presence did more for me just to have her sitting by my side in the waiting room than months of treatment. We couldn't say much, for as usual, there were a host of female guardians around. But then it wasn't necessary to say much, for our eyes did speak.

After she had left, the mailman brought me a black-rimmed letter from home. It went to say that my mother had died in the Lenten days. Now I knew what higher power had sent Elena to me on this day; it was to comfort me and strengthen me for this impending loss.

My health had returned but the depression of my mind remained because on my very first walk to Elena's house I found it deserted. Neighbors informed me that the family had moved but nobody would volunteer any information where to. From house to house I went and everyone shrugged shoulders so I couldn't help but realize that the neighbors had been warned not to reveal the new address to me.

I buried myself in work as best I

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could, automaton-like. Night after night I wandered through the town, peering secretly through the curtains of those innumerable little homes of the poorer sections, always hoping to find her and in vain. Her silence was wearing me down.

One night an elderly, Spanish lady beckoned to me from the porch of her house and coming near, I recognized in her a woman I had seen with Elena's family.

"Your girl is very, very sick," she told me in a whisper. "The family has moved there-and-there. Elena is now in bed all the time, she needs you, but her parents won't let you come. I tell you what, doctor: it's a crime. Don't you pay any attention to the old folks. You just walk in and if you are still able to, help her. Wait, I'll just lock my door and then I show you the house where she lives."

I thanked her from the heart and then without a moment's hesitation I burst into the house which the kind lady pointed out to me. If anybody had tried to stop me, I think, I would have used violence. Right in the hallway I saw her sweet little face, looking straight into my eyes from a chair far in the kitchen corner. I cried:

"Elena, let me come in."

"Yes, doctor, do come, I'm so glad you are here."

SHE was dressed in a silk kimono I had sent her for Christmas, but I saw immediately the pale color on her cheeks, the light in her eyes and the emaciation of her body. The only thing to make me happy of her appearance was the fact that she wore my diamond engagement ring.

Presently, of course, mother and some more of the family came into the room and stood there in silence. I simply said:

"Good evening, good evening, mother; I am so happy I found my Elena again. Tell me, what doctor is attending to her now?"

Angrily her mother burst out:

"I am her doctor now."

I laughed a little bitterly:

"You are some doctor, mother. I am sure you are a good nurse but not a doctor. I have come to stay. From now on you might as well consider me in charge for good."

I left them standing open-mouthed and turned to my bride:

"Please, darling, tell me whatever you wish or need at the moment and I will go and bring it to you."

I should have said it before how very modest Elena was at all times. Though she needed practically everything, she would never confess to it, and so it was now:

"I don't need anything."

Taking her pulse I felt that it was weak, the breathing shallow, the general appearance was anaemic and a certain debility indicated disturbed blood circulation. Knowing how easily she took offense I did not tell her that, apart from improper treatment, she had an abscess on her leg caused by so many injections by another doctor. Lest she should become over-excited I spent only a few minutes in the house. Then, with a mixture of relief and sorrow, I left and spent the night with preparations for a determined campaign to save her life despite all obstacles.

Before I could start new tests were needed. So the next day I brought armsful of fruit and little delicacies which, as I knew, would stimulate my girl's appetite. I was quite shocked to find how weak she had become. She only took a little fruit for, when her mother brought her a cup of good chicken broth, I noticed how Elena secretly emptied it out into the bucket

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near the bed. I also brought her a jeweler's catalogue and told her to select anything she liked in it, and which she wanted. This, too, was done to revive her interest in life. She marked a bracelet watch, a necklace and a wedding ring and told me:

"But only one, I do not want all three of them." Naturally I ordered all the three for her. This gesture brought the family into a more cooperative mood, so that they were more agreeable when I brought my electrical apparatus over for the treatment.

Because I knew by now the superstitions of these people and anticipated their resistance when I arrived with the heavy artillery of the million-volt transformer, I started with a small apparatus and tried to get them used to it in a playful manner.

I placed the little inductor box and showed Elena how it worked. It had a dry-cell battery for power and a small movable shocking coil with silk cords and brass handles. Elena sat in her bed, her eyes bright with curiosity. I placed the handles and told her how to slide the coil for "weak" and then pull it for "strong" and how to operate the little switch. Then she took the handles.

"Do you feel anything?"

"No," she said, but my darling was cautious; she wanted me to test the electricity myself. After this was done to her satisfaction, I moved the coil slowly to strong until the current tickled her and she cried for me to stop. Delighted and thinking that it was great fun, she said:

"Call mama and Nana, Carl."

They all came and Elena played the joke on them and made Nana jump and so she made her mother. Gradually then the family, if it did not acquire much scientific knowledge of electricity, was at least convinced that it was fun and did no harm.

THAT evening I noticed for the first time that Elena coughed quite severely, was short of breath and had a sinking temperature.

Throat medication therefore became my next step. I had prepared two kind of throat sprays and solutions for rinsing. When I brought this, by good luck an old Spanish lady was with her. She was the only woman, who from the beginning had been on my side. Elena, I must say that much, was not an easy patient. Tiny particles of the spray in the form of mist settled on the sheets and pillows and Elena found that the odor did not appeal to her.

"Take the spray away," she said, "as far as possible. I can still smell it." Then she turned to the old lady: "Take this pillow out, granny, take the sheets out too and give me a new nightgown."

"Santa Maria," exclaimed granny. "What else?"

It was a pity she didn't like this fluid, it was most potent to counteract t.b. The other one had a more pleasant odor but then she disliked the taste.

I had dissolved twenty dollars worth of pure gold and brought a sample of this solution for Elena to take a drop of it in her drinking water. She liked the looks of it, but again she couldn't stand the metallic taste.

My old sorrows of having my sick girl in what practically was a railroad station came back with a vengeance. Not with malicious intent but from sheer curiosity to witness all this strange apparatus I had brought and how it worked, relatives, friends, neighbors in droves gathered around the sickbed. They generally sat and lounged as near as possible on and around Elena's bed with the result that one night the whole bed broke down and my girl suffered bruises and a severe shock. She begged me to buy her a new bed,

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but not another iron one. She wanted a wooden bed with high-closed ends for protection, so the people couldn't crowd her from all sides. Besides, her desire was for an inner-spring mattress and a dresser of her own, things she had never had before. For the first time we were alone that night; the collapse of the bed had put the camp-followers to flight.

The following afternoon the furniture company delivered the bed, the best and biggest bed I had been able to find. Soon afterwards there came another van with the largest mosquito top I had ordered and sheets and silk cushions in pink and blue and the dresser. Well, my darling was as happy as a princess in the fortress of her big, new bed and playing with a briefcase full of banknotes, which I had brought her; check books of the Reich Credit Bank and Key West State Bank, from the German inflation, with millions and billions of marks. I smiled, it did me good to see her happy as a child and enthralled with the illusion of being a multi-millionaire.

"Don't forget, that I still want to marry you, darling," I said.

"Oh, Carl, I wish we could, but I think I am going to die."

"No, darling, you mustn't believe that, you won't be going to heaven for quite a while yet."

"I am not going to heaven, I am not good enough, I think I will be going to hell."

"In that case, dear, I will be going with you too. Wherever you go, there I'll go. But I am sure, that if you die, I'll take you in my arms and the good Lord will take us both into his heaven."

She motioned me to a little trunk which was standing in the corner:

"Bring this over, Carl, will you, please?"

Raising herself in the bed she took from the bottom of the little trunk a Spanish fan and opened it:

"I used this when I still was able to dance." At last she took out a couple of photographs. They were bridal pictures of herself and her former husband. She looked at them and then handed them to me with a gesture of despair:

"Take them away, Carl, it makes me sick to look at this. I do not know what folly made me marry that man. Cut him off my side."

She handed me a pair of scissors and I did her will, cutting the husband away from her side. She then told me to burn his picture in the kitchen stove.

That was the first indication she gave that she did not love him any more and of her willingness to let me take his place.

"If I must die," she said at last, "all I can leave you is my body. For I am only a sickly girl, so I can't marry you while I am sick. But you will take care of my body after I am dead, won't you."

I promised I would and it was the most sacred promise which I ever made in life.

I kissed her then and laid her gently back into her cushions and put her feet high so as to get blood circulation back into her head for her breath was getting short.

This was what I consider as our marriage vow.

THE latest test revealed that the laryngeal t.b. infiltration had made rapid progress. I found it necessary to move the ray-equipment I had bought for Elena into her room. My own home-built million-volt equipment I was unable to use because it weighed tons and would have necessitated the laying of concrete foundations in Elena's house. The machine I had

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bought was a high-power, high-frequency medical unit with violet-ray equipment, fulguration and throat examining attachments. It was strong enough to induce artificial fever.

This now I placed near her bed and plugged the connection into the light socket. I switched on the Tesla coil and hooked it up with one of the throat vacuum tubes. Elena watched tensely every one of my movements when I adjusted the apparatus, so that it showed only the faintest blue light in the tube without any sparkling. I then asked her to open her mouth wide and to hold still while I slowly inserted the tip of the glass tube until it almost reached her tonsils. For a while she was very patient but when she became nervous, she moved a little which, of course, had the effect of a little hot bite from the frequency sparks on her tonsils and tongue. I withdrew the tube whenever this happened and I heard her pathetic little complaint:

"The electricity has bitten me."

Towards the end of the treatment I noticed that her breathing had become normal and she had found great relief. I left the spark discharge on the wide gap for another hour. In this manner her room was charged with enough oxygen electrons for a whole night's sleep.

The next night I applied five minute larynx radiation with the ultra-electrode tube to prevent dyspnea. Then exchanging the electrode for a surface tube I gave the outer surface of throat and chest an all-over high-frequency radiation for thirty minutes with medium strength. She enjoyed this as she would have a bath; it did her a lot of good because this radiation stimulates the tissues to new activity. Again there was pronounced absence of coughing and her voice was stronger.

"I feel so much better, Carl," she said, "perhaps I can soon go out a little and my first trip will be to church."

To keep her hope alive for this outing I went to Holzberg's store the next day and selected six Sunday's silk dresses for her and also silk stockings.

Tests showed a slight improvement. I began to become a little more hopeful. The next time I laid her on the auto-condensation cushions and placed one sponge electrode on her chest, gradually increasing the high-frequency current until the milliampere meter showed four hundred. I let it stay there and told her to cry out when it began to burn. I watched her heartbeat and breathing and it was just ten minutes when she called:

"Oh, Carl, it burns."

Then I gently reduced the flow of electricity to zero. Her body temperature had increased between one and two degrees above normal. The pain in the chest had disappeared, breathing was normal but naturally pulse was fast. I covered her up with blankets and told her to rest. Again she was all right for the night.

The next day her family told me with many complaints that Elena had nearly choked that morning in expelling a large plug from her lungs. Personally I was delighted because the good results I had expected from the diathermic treatment had begun to show. The removal of the plug gave her more room to breathe but it was too bad that the family interpreted this result just the other way around; ignorance, as usual.

"She don't need any electric treatment," cried her mother.

"You are running up a high electricity bill for us," shouted her father, "and who is going to pay for that?"

In vain I protested, of course, I would pay the bill for the electricity, whatever it was. The outcry was:

"Get all these devil machines out of our house."

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I confess that I lost my temper:

"Will you take the responsibility to let your daughter die through your stupidity?"

Her mother burst into tears, covered her face and left the room. Worst of all, I heard Elena calling from the adjoining room:

"Oh, Carl, you have hurt mother."

"I am sorry, darling, but it was necessary to tell her the truth."

All this was terrible, because from now on I was again up against the stubborn family resistance which sabotaged my efforts.

For a few days the coughing was stayed but since Elena refused any further treatments, it now came back and so did the hoarseness which made her almost unable to speak. I had sent her a new radio with an amplifier microphone into which she could speak in a whisper and yet be heard. How pitiful it was that she would always gladly accept any such gadget but refuse what really could help her condition. Once she had made up her mind that she did not like a thing, it was final and I could only desist. Pressure on my part led nowhere.

IN HER weakened condition her hearing had become very acute and hypersensitive. All the more did it pain me to see her suffer, when a radio across the street was always being played full blast and father filled the house with all the Toms and Dicks and Harrys of the neighborhood who were noisy and forever nosy about the equipment around Elena's bed, crowding her and cheating her out of her last chance in life.

I had to prepare for the emergency of an hemorrhage which now could be expected any day. I had tested my own blood and found that it matched Elena's. I kept my equipment for blood transfusion in readiness and sterilized at all times. I was ready to give half of my own blood as a last resort.

To relieve her at least from the radio blare, I had my little organ moved over to her house. Now I sat down evenings and played some of the soft, old harmonies such as Palestrina's.

Of food she took almost none except for fruit which she enjoyed, especially limes. She was able to eat those with relish, skins and all, and this gave me a little happiness because limes are a sort of antidote against the tuberculosis. Nature asserted itself in this instinctive craving for needed remedy.

If only her will to live could have been stronger. Do what I might, she was by now convinced and resolved that she was going to die and nothing I could say to the contrary would break this convinction. It was those many ignorant people who told her that tuberculous patients all die. Also she must have felt the serious deficiency of her chest inwardly.

One day, when I had lunch in a restaurant in town, I overheard a conversation in a nearby booth. People who couldn't see me talked about Elena's illness and that her family and friends planned to have her removed to some mental asylum out of town because she wanted to become Catholic. I was horrified at that idea and so as to protect her against any trickery I immediately wrote the following statement:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: This is to testify that Elena Hoyos is my wife and that her mental status is normal. She is perfectly sane and under the medical care of Dr. Lombard and myself. I will not tolerate any interference or her removal to any institution or asylum.

Signed: Carl von Cosel,
Pathologist in the Public Health Service

I wrote this because my duty kept me at the hospital during the daytime.

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I brought her the letter that night and advised her to keep it always under her pillow and to produce it only if anybody should try to remove her from her home.

More than a hundred times throughout these trying months I felt sorely tempted to get some of the more obnoxious visitors by the scruff of their necks and throw them out of the house. Only the thought that violence of this kind was certain to harm Elena made me restrain. It was particularly bad at mealtimes, when her father brought in some fat proprietor of a local bar who would keep on talking to Elena in rapid Spanish while she held her bowl of soup between her little hands and it was getting cold and her fingers cramped and she was too polite to eat. Only once after waiting twenty minutes did I muster the courage to say in plain English:

"Don't pay any attention to that fellow. Go right ahead, Elena, and eat your soup." She looked at me as if hypnotized and the fat man left in a rage. She ate the cold soup from the bowl.

The fascination of that barkeeper was that he flashed a loud diamond ring before Elena's eyes. In such matters she reacted like a child admiring it, so the only way for me was to outshine this diamond. I had one just as big on my own hand, but had never flashed it about. I put it on her hand next to her wedding ring:

"Would you like this one, darling?"

She nodded.

"Here you are, darling, I give it to you with my love."

She blushed with joy and would hardly permit me to take this ring to a jeweler just for a day to have it fitted to her finger.

"Look, mother, look here, now I have a real big diamond ring," she called happily, forgetting her misery for a time.

But when on October 11, 1931, I handed her the sparkling toy, she was so weak she could hardly smile and she was nervously asking:

"Did you bring my ring?"

"Yes, darling, here they both are."

I placed them on her finger, the solitaire diamond first and then the wedding ring next to it as security.

Calling her mother, and holding out her hand, she said:

"Look here, Mother. Oh, I'm so glad."

"You have five rings now," her mother said.

"She still has five other fingers left without a single diamond," I said.

Her mother laughed, going back to the kitchen.

Then I asked Elena if she had any pain and she said:

"No, I am all spent; father took me out for a walk to Celia's house (one-half mile) to see her radio, that's all."

"Darling, you simply must not take such walks; they drain your strength, you might collapse in the middle of the road. Get well and your airplane is waiting for you and we'll go together any place you like to see."

She promised it should not happen again.

Friday, October 16th, 1931, I came to the house and found that Elena was not there. Mother informed me that the father had taken her for an auto ride to town and she would be back in half an hour. In great anxiety I waited and when the old Model T Ford at last arrived her father carried my girl in his arms and put her in a chair. She had fainted on the way back and now she sat limp and pale, looking at me from sunken eyes as if to say:

"Help me, please, help me, Carl."

Life was fading fast.

Gently I picked her up and put her

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back to bed. There she took off all the rings from her fingers and piled them in a little heap:

"I won't have those now for very long."

I placed her in Trendelingburg position.

When the color returned into her face I left her to seek out the father. Knowing that this ride had very nearly cost Elena her life I was in a holy wrath which had to come out. I motioned the father, who contentedly was smoking his pipe, to come with me behind the house out of earshot. There I told him without mincing words that another ride like this might spell the end of his daughter.

"But why do you think she should not take auto rides?"

"Because it will kill her, take my word for it."

He laughed aloud:

"Auto rides never will kill anyone."

Friday, October 23rd, I found my darling in a very exhausted state. She was too tired so I left soon and in utter depression. Yes, it is true that people can learn only by experience. But all too often they get the experience only after some irreparable harm has been done. In my distress my only comfort was that the family opposition against me now finally seemed to be broken down. I had hopes to resume the radiation treatments. I had hopes that, despite the extensive damage, the lesions would begin to heal again. I had hopes that, when Elena was out of danger, we would get married. As long as she lived I never abandoned hope.

CHAPTER IV

Elena's Death

SUNDAY, October 25th, 1931, I had just finished my records after the day's work in the hospital and was just about to put on my black coat which I always wore for my Sunday's visit with my bright Elena, when the brakes of a car screeched in front of the lab. door.

Mario, husband of Elena's sister Nana, rushed in and told me breathlessly:

"Elena has just died, come with me."

Now I knew the cause of the oppression which had gripped me all day long.

We raced through the town. It was just five p.m. when we reached her house. More than a block away we could already hear the people moan and scream. There was a big crowd around the house, we had to break a passage through the people.

Hoping against hope that something could be done I requested for all the people to get out of the room. Then I went down to my knees before the bed, tested her breath and heartbeats. But there was nothing to be heard above the screams of the people. I placed the faradic testing electrode on her neck so that it covered the nerve region. There was no reaction. That moment Dr. Galey arrived. He, too, examined her to find that all life was gone.

Mario tiptoed to my side and in my desperation I called out:

"If only you had come to me half an hour earlier, perhaps it wouldn't have been too late."

"I drove as fast as I could," he mumbled. "What more could I do?"

He had lost time trying all doctors in town but found none at home.

In halting words he told me what had happened.

On that fatal Sunday afternoon her father had taken her again on an auto ride to town despite my warning. She had dressed herself for the occasion in her new silk dress with all her jewelry and she had waved to all the friends she had met in the streets. Nobody

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had suspected that this was her last farewell.

Until finally she had collapsed in the car. Her father, supporting her limp form, had driven home at breakneck speed instead of driving to the nearby hospital, where we doctors might have saved her life.

When he got home, his child was already dying. Her last words were for everybody to leave her room with the exception of a young woman who always had been her best friend.

Elena's jaws had dropped but her eyes were bright and clear. They had a faraway look and as I gazed into those beloved eyes, they seemed to become deeper and deeper like wells which, with magnetic power, drew me in. I could not tear my eyes away from her; I could look forever.

With shock I noticed that already she had been stripped of all the finery she had worn in death and that she was now clad in some cast-away and dirty old shirt which I never had seen before. Likewise I noted that all the jewelry which I had given her, was gone.

My poor darling Elena; with her body still warm, she had been robbed of everything she ever possessed on earth.

Nana came in sobbing to ask whether Elena was still alive.

"No, she will never come back again," I answered.

Nana looked at her sister horrified:

"Please, close those eyes, doctor! Please, close them, I can't bear the look of them, I can't stand her stare, it drives me crazy."

"What a pity," I answered. "I could look into those beautiful eyes forever and ever."

But then I bent down and gently closed the eyes of my bride Elena, because I did not want anybody else to do this for her.

Nana quickly left to join the family in the next room while I sat quietly by Elena's side until the undertaker came.

Mr. Pritchard, the undertaker, at first discussed the matter with the father because there were documents to sign. I heard a great hubbub and confusion of voices and all of a sudden her father burst into the deathroom:

"I'm helpless, I don't know what to do, I'm in despair. Please help us, doctor. I know you thought the world of Elena. I know you will do this for her. See to it that she gets a decent funeral and a good place at the cemetery. I leave everything to you. I give you complete charge in everything to do just as you see fit. We poor people we have nothing. I leave her to you!"

"All right," I said, "but you should have left her to me while still alive."

He thanked me exuberantly. Then he called Mr. Pritchard into the deathroom and introduced me to the undertaker and told him that I was in charge of all the arrangements according to my wish and to that of the deceased.

I didn't think it was befitting to discuss these matters in the presence of my Elena. So I went with Mr. Pritchard to his funeral home. There I selected the coffin, the flowers and whatever else was needed. But when the matter of the dress came up I felt I had to speak to Nana, after removal of the body.

"Nana, why did you take away Elena's clothes? Why did you put that dirty rag on her? I want you to go and immediately bring her new silk dress, the last one I gave her. As to her jewels I will discuss that with you at a later time."

Of course, Nana started to cry but was sufficiently cowed so that after a few minutes she produced the dress. I handed it to Mr. Pritchard.

Throughout these technicalities I wondered over the fact that I was able calmly and deliberately to arrange all

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these things. The strange part of it was that with my brains I fully realized that Elena was dead but that my heart, with a far greater force, told me: "She is not dead." It was probably because I listened to the voice of my heart much more than to that of my brain, that the brain was enabled to keep on functioning in a reasonable manner.

THE body had been removed from the house. In the funeral parlor I had placed a big heart of roses on the coffin of my Elena and I kept the vigil with her, then the coffin, with Elena and roses came back to her house.

At night I returned to the hospital for a few hours sleep.

October 26th, the funeral was set for 5 p.m. I worked all of the day. At four I closed my office and dressed.

There was a surprisingly large number of mourners; masses of flowers formed almost a solid wall around my Elena's house.

There was nobody in Elena's room. I took my seat near to the coffin so I could drink in all her beauty for a last time. Beneath the closed lids her eyeballs seemed to have concentrated and they were looking straight into my eyes so I could feel their stare like a hypnotic touch. I sat lonely at Elena's side among the flowers during this last hour.

More and more people passed by the coffin depositing more flowers and the whole room now seemed to be filled with flowers and their overpowering fragrance. One thing which impressed me was the reverent silence of all these Latin peoples, who usually were so loud, being a Spanish custom. It was only I, however, who sensed Elena's spirit floating in the room, fairy-like or rather angel-like, from flower to flower. Maybe all those people reverently respected my silence communing with my bride in the casket, as there was no other living one inside Elena's death room.

I noticed especially one wrinkled little old man who deposited flowers, bent down and broke into tears at her side, and went out crying. Later I learned that this man had been Elena's former father-in-law. His was a human decency not for show, but for love of heart, which the husband lacked, for he never showed up.

The undertaker awoke me from my reveries; the funeral procession was about to begin, and everybody had to take seats in the cars waiting outside.

I said to Nana: "She hasn't one single piece of her jewelry on her."

Thereupon Nana sobbingly produced at least the ivory necklace and the rose. I myself put on the necklace, and I wound the silver rosary around Elena's left wrist. Finally Nana also gave the black velvet felt with the brilliant clasp which Elena had loved so much and which belonged to her black silk dress, also one of the embroidered handkerchiefs which I had given Elena the day before her death.

At the very last moment, when the coffin was about to be closed, and everybody was out of the room, I took a letter from my breast pocket and put it under Elena's dress on her breast. Then I kissed her goodbye on the temple which was the one place which had remained uncontaminated by other kisses.

It was a very long procession, one hundred cars, which followed my bride and me to her resting place. All along the way there sounded in my ears Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Mad as this must appear to most people, to me this funeral procession was like a wedding march, and the slow stepping of the pallbearers along the hearse in front of my car beating the proper measure for this symphony.

At church the organ sounded with its angels' voices of a happy meeting in

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the better world. It was only then that I cried and cried from happiness. For now the long, sad, worldly struggle was all over. My bride was beyond malice, beyond unhappiness, beyond her pain. She was in the hands of God, the best, the gentlest hands that be.

Father Morreaux, who had but recently taken my Elena into the folds of the church, now spoke the last rites for her.

The coffin sank into its grave and when I thought, as did everybody else, it was all over, some Cuban, whom I had never seen before, indulged in a piece of fiery oratory wherein he demanded punishment for "the person responsible for her early death."

Whether he meant me I did not know and cared less, but I thanked him for his righteous thoughts and with a handclasp I assured him of my sincere support of his idea.

This then was what many, perhaps most people, would call "the end."

A STRANGE kind of new life now began for me. It was something like a rebirth after these last two oppressing and depressing years. Now at least nobody could take my Elena away from me. Although I could not see her any longer, I felt her presence all the time.

It was only natural that I went daily to the cemetery. What disturbed me there was the fact that, owing to the nature of the ground, hers was a shallow grave and by no means safe from water. In the dry season there was little danger, but I was worried at the thought of what would happen to my darling once the torrential rains started to come. There was no drainage of any kind in this cemetery.

It seemed unfair that her beautiful form should perish from the water; the only possible way to prevent this was to build a concrete vault around the coffin and to do it soon. In the meantime I kept the mound of the grave covered with a piece of tarpaulin which I took from my plane. The edges of the tarpaulin I secured to the ground with stones, and all the flowers I laid on top. Now she was reasonably safe, at least until I could build her a tomb.

Considering how often I have mentioned the strenuous relations between myself and Elena's family, readers will find it hard to understand why every night I went to her house.

It was the memory, of course, which drew me there, the atmosphere of Elena lingering on. But that was exactly why I felt great sadness in finding her room desolate with all of Elena's things removed from it.

When I inquired the parents told me that everything was burned, and that they abhorred this house where one of theirs had died and that they were moving to some other part of town.

I had the distinct feeling that I was not told the truth and that not all the things I had given Elena had been destroyed. It was not the material value of these things, it was the memory connected with them which made me say:

"Now, listen, if you are moving out I'm going to rent this house for myself, even if I have to buy it. Moreover you'd better be warned that the furniture and other things and jewelry I've given Elena were bought on the installment plan. If you want to keep these things for yourself I will notify the company according to the contract and you will have to pay the balance owing."

They did not like that particular idea and just as I had foreseen, the furniture was now produced from somewhere and placed back in Elena's room. Nothing had been burned except a few sheets and pillows and the trunk which had been the family's.

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Delighted with the result I now told them:

"No matter whether you move or stay on, I'm going to live in my Elena's room, where she has lived and died because it is here that I distinctly feel at home in her presence."

To this they agreed and cooperated and from then on I slept in Elena's bed. It still preserved the sweet scent of her hair; for years I had not slept so well as I did in Elena's atmosphere. Nana had returned the old kimona last worn by Elena but she kept all the other dresses. I suppose she had need of them.

Regarding the jewels Mother told me that she had them all and none was missing and they were locked up.

"Keep them," I told her, "until the tomb is ready. Then I'll adorn her with all her jewels, because I don't want anybody else to wear them."

"Ah, but what's the use? There won't be anything left of Elena but bones," she said.

"Don't you believe it, Mother. I'll take good care of her. I'll not permit her body to decay and if in the grave Elena should lose her hair I'll buy new hair and put it back on her head."

"Don't do that," said the mother; "don't use other people's hair; put her own hair back—I have some which she had cut off a year ago."

At these words she opened her dresser and took out, wrapped in paper, the beautiful long tresses of my Elena which had been cut off a year ago when she decided to wear her hair in the American style. This package she gave me, for which I thanked her with all my heart.

Having resigned herself to my determination, Mother was now a very much changed woman indeed, and in a way so was the father too. He assured me that her room was now my own for the rest of my life. Both were satisfied that I would take care of Elena and were convinced of my undying love for her. I disconnected the radio in my room which I had purchased for Elena, that from now on was to be silent as a tribute to her death.

THE father had become restless. He had no peace of mind and rarely was at home. Mother had become very quiet but the real reason for this was that she had fallen sick. There was something the matter with her circulation; she took treatment, by some Cuban doctor, but it didn't help. Instead it got worse. The heart became affected and the arms and legs were gradually paralyzed.

I did not wish to interfere; after all she had every right to choose her doctor as she pleased. One night, however, her condition was so painful that she called me to her bed.

"Please help me, Carlos; the other doctor doesn't help me, but makes me worse and I am sure that you can do me good."

I made a careful analysis of her condition and after I had found the proper medication she was cured within a week. Now the last barrier was broken down; she was sincerely grateful for what I had done for her and even more for my care for Elena. At last there was someone who showed sincere attachment. She thanked me with all her heart.

All this time I used every free hour planning and constructing the tomb.

I bought a larger plot around Elena's grave, sufficient for a family tomb. There I sat every afternoon after work on a little chair drawing plans and waiting for the mason who had promised to help me with the work. This man, however, with whom I had contracted, proved to be unreliable. He didn't

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show up, but kept me waiting and precious time was lost. Meantime the first heavy rains drenched the cemetery and I became very much concerned over my Elena, especially since I suspected odor developing from the shallow grave.

In desperation I went in search of another concrete worker; finally I discovered one and almost immediately we commenced work on the tomb.

But before we could start it was necessary to obtain a disinterment permit to remove the coffin from the site for temporary storage at a funeral home. It took us about a month to build the tomb, but then another month was needed to allow for the concrete to harden, and for the finishing of the interior another month.

Disinterment revealed that rains had indeed soaked the coffin and that moreover it had been partly crushed when a couple of grave diggers had trampled down the ground too hard after the funeral. It was with dire anticipation that I now approached the urgent task of taking Elena out of the damaged coffin and placing her into a new and stronger casket I had bought.

Toward this purpose the mortician and I arranged it so that there were no other dead in the morgue at the date for the re-bedding of her body. In preperation I had bought and brought all that could possibly be needed; new sheets, pillows, sterile cotton, gauze, chemicals and sprays. I also had built in my spare time an incubation tank and had placed it in the morgue just in case it should be needed.

This done I took a taxi and hastened to Elena's house to fetch her jewels which now were to be restored to her. Mother raised no difficulty over this; she gladly handed me the little box filled with the glittering toys and I hastened back.

After all the customary sanitary precautions had been taken, I opened the seals of the vault for which I held the key. The inner coffin, much damaged, became visible. Together we slid it out and set it on the concrete floor.

The opening of the lid gave us considerable trouble owing to the demolished boards lying inside on the body and because its lining inside had become attached to Elena's face and body. Through careful work I was able to cut away this silken lining from the lid. The contents were now laid bare.

As the first step I sprayed diluted formalin all over the shrouded body in ample quantities. This was for disinfection and also to harden the body tissues before we undertook to detach from the skin the drapery which had become glued to it.

Decay had set in in a most disheartening manner. Only with the greatest care was I able to peel the pieces of textile from the body; this took hours. We then lifted the body out of the coffin and laid it on a table with a clean sheet. Having sprayed the body all over again, I now proceeded to sponge her face with a specially prepared solution and also her hands and feet. With dismay I discovered that in view of the damage already done much more cleaning was required than could be done in the one night I had the morgue at my disposal.

Till dawn I worked with every energy, appalled at the negligence of the mortician who had failed to embalm the coffin itself which would have prevented much of the decay, because it was the coffin which smelled awful, not the body.

WHEN morning came, my sweet bride was freed from all outward signs of decay and from that of odor. When the mortician came to work we placed her on thick layers of sterile

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cotton and after I sprayed her form all over with eua de cologne we now covered it all around with similar layers of sterile cotton. This done we lifted her into her new coffin and then this coffin into the new outer metal coffin which I had selected. This one was sealed all around with screws. The casket was of the air-tight type, held together by a hundred screws.'

The next day many people came to the funeral home wanting to see Elena but I had left instructions that under no circumstances were the coffins to be opened; this because I felt that Elena was not yet in a condition to be seen.

A few nights thereafter, when I could again have the use of the morgue, I took Elena out of the inner coffin and placed her into my specially made incubator tank. After this had been completely sealed, a task which took till midnight, I poured into the top valve of the tank a certain solution which I had prepared for her, both antiseptic and nourishing for body cells. This I kept pouring until the tank was completely filled. The tank was then placed into the casket. Now I felt easier; at least for the time being Elena was protected against further decay.

Now the tomb was finished and it looked more like a pleasant summer residence than a burial place and that it really was for my dear bride. This was exactly what I had desired for her and I felt sure that she would like this, her new little house. Onlookers passing by said they would like to move in it and make it their house.

The night before she was to move into her new residence I wrote a certain letter and in the morning took it with me to the tomb. The undertaker did the placement of the casket and then he left me, and I laid down the crucifix on top of it and lighted the little votive lights in the niche above her head, lights which from now on were to burn there day and night.

This done I closed the little curtains of blue silk which were to prevent curious people from peeping in, and saying goodbye to my bride for today I left her little house, carefully locking its door with three locks.

CHAPTER V

The Wooing of the Soul

EVERY evening at sunset I went to the little house I had built for her. I didn't to do this from a plan or with any specific intention. I just felt drawn to the spot by some magnetic power which always increased toward evening and became quite irresistible when the sun set below the horizon. There were days when I had no intention whatsoever to go, when indeed I had pressing work on my hands. Each time, however, I simply had to drop everything to go to the little house in time for the rendezvous. With the moment I reached the cemetery I always experienced a sudden relief from the urge, the pressure which had driven me on. I had indeed a date, I felt it.

After a brief visit I usually sat inside the door, completely relaxed and as contented as in the daytime I never was. Then I allowed my thoughts to wander, wander, and they were all about my Elena. The troubled past reappeared before the mind's eye like a motion picture reel. A times I felt very tired in the consideration of this past and then it happened that I fell asleep.

Eighteen months after Elena's death had passed in this manner. There came a night when I sat inside the tomb, near the metal coffin on a little chair. It had been a sultry day and I had left the door wide open so that the refreshing coolness of the night could enter. The moist heat, however, was still in the

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little room and this was probably the reason why I fell fast asleep. Suddenly I was aroused by a loud, crashing report as if a cannon had been fired close to my ear. Thus roughly awakened I thought for a moment that perhaps some mischievous kid had fired a toy pistol to frighten me. But there was nobody around. Having patrolled the grounds outside, I returned into the tomb and now I noticed by the reflection of the street lights outside that 50 locks which held the metal casket had sprung open. I examined them closely and it was perfectly clear that they had been sprung with great force and all at once, and that this must have been the loud report which had aroused me.

Standing there in the semidarkness I smiled. For I remembered the prankish manner in which the ghost of my ancestor, the Counter Cosel, had manifested itself to me, smashing my laboratory equipment when I was a youngster. I also remembered how fond Elena always had been of the fun of a practical joke. This breaking of the locks looked very much like Elena to me; perhaps she thought it funny to jolt her bridegroom in this manner who had dared to fall asleep in her presence.

Now I could clearly hear a tapping or a crackling sound inside, very distant, like nails of delicate fingers, probing and scratching a metal surface.

With spontaneous resolution I got the keys out of my pocket and quickly opened the remaining locks of the casket, and with some effort I succeeded in lifting the heavy lid. Starlight revealed that the inner coffin was still intact and sealed. But since I felt the necessity for closer examination and was unable to hold up the lid by my strength for any length of time, I looked around for some means to prop it up.

I happened to remember a piece of lumber lying around. I got it and now, lifting the cover once more, I could support it with the log with enough space in between to squeeze head and shoulders in.

I bent my ear to the inner coffin and listened intently. There was no sound, and I removed its lid altogether, putting it on the opposite side in the tomb. I tested every one of the hundred screws of the innermost casket; they were all intact. After screwing off the caps I tested the top valve of the incubator, which had a filter of sterile cotton. As I took this filter out, a strange and pleasant perfume emanated and spread all over the room. There was no pressure of gas inside. There was only this mysterious smell which resembled a hamine (fragrant chemical in human blood) and not any manufactured perfume. It was exactly like the healthy and agreeable odor of a young woman's skin, on a warm day. It simply was the typical odor which I loved so much of my bride Elena, and of her hair.

AFTER a while I placed my ear against the open valve and after a minute or so I heard her voice. Very distinctly, in soft tones; it sounded so very much alive that instinctively I looked around everywhere to see whether by any chance she was standing somewhere nearby. She wasn't outside the coffin, of course, but unmistakably she spoke from the air inside, and she said these words:

"You do love me still, don't you? Tell me, am I really dead?"

"Elena, my darling, no you are not really dead. It's only your body that's asleep and your spirit is dreaming."

"Carlos, where am I?"

"You are in a little house, darling, which I have built for you. I built it so you should not be disturbed, and be protected in your sleep."

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"Is then this your house too?"

"No darling," I said. "I'm only here to visit you, and to wait for you to call me."

Minutes passed in which she seemed to think this over and then she spoke again:

"I wish you would take me with you to your home. I want to stay with you."

"With all my heart, darling. I will take you with me, if needs be, to the end of the world."

She gave no answer to this, at least not an audible answer, but it came to me as a divination that her lips kept moving down there and said something to me which I understood. That was why after a while I said aloud:

"Yes, darling, I will do exactly as you wish. When the moon changes it is to be. Then I will take you with me and you will stay with me forever."

There was no audible answer on her part to this. But a new wave of the familiar, the beloved fragrance of her sweet body arose strongly from the valve and filled the whole room.

A long time passed in which I had the top end of her coffin embraced in silent reverie. At last I felt that now she wished to go to sleep and it was time for me to leave her. It seemed cruel, however, to close the outer casket; so I left the lid standing open. With a last farewell "sleep sweet and God bless you," I tiptoed out of the room.

Now this may sound surprising, but the fact is that coming home to my room I felt wondrously at ease, elated and at the same time very, very tired. I fell immediately asleep, deeply and soundly as a little child.

FROM that day on I brought her flowers every night and other presents too. Well knowing how easy it was to make my Elena happy with some little thing, I always brought her a package of something bought on the way to her. One day it would be a few pretty handkerchiefs, the next a Spanish shawl, a comb, a vanity case. My greeting words were always:

"God bless you, darling, I am so happy I am back with you."

If this appears a strange or crazy thing to do, let me repeat, that once in India I had lain for dead myself and had thought I still were in my bed, whereas in reality, I had already been placed into the morgue. From this, my own case, and from many others on record, I knew that death is not the end of life and that resurrection from the grave is actually a possibility.

Naturally, the life of the dead is very different from normal. All the reactions are tremendously slowed down. There were days, when Elena's spirit remained perfectly silent and again days, when it would answer to my words after an interval of fifteen minutes or more.

A curious fact was that Elena's spirit showed all the curiosity of a very young girl, a curiosity which extended to the content of my pockets. Sometimes I carried things from the hardware store which I needed for my plane. Invariably then Elena would ask me:

"What is in that paper bag in your right coat pocket?"

And I would laughingly explain:

"Oh, darling, those are screws and little brass nails I need for your plane."

Often she was not satisfied with the explanation unless I spread the screws and the nails, or whatever it was, on top of the coffin for her to see.

By the same token she insisted on all the amenities of polite conversation. I never failed to greet her and to say goodbye in the ceremonious, Spanish manner.

Unfortunately my daily visits to the tomb and my prolonged stays there at-

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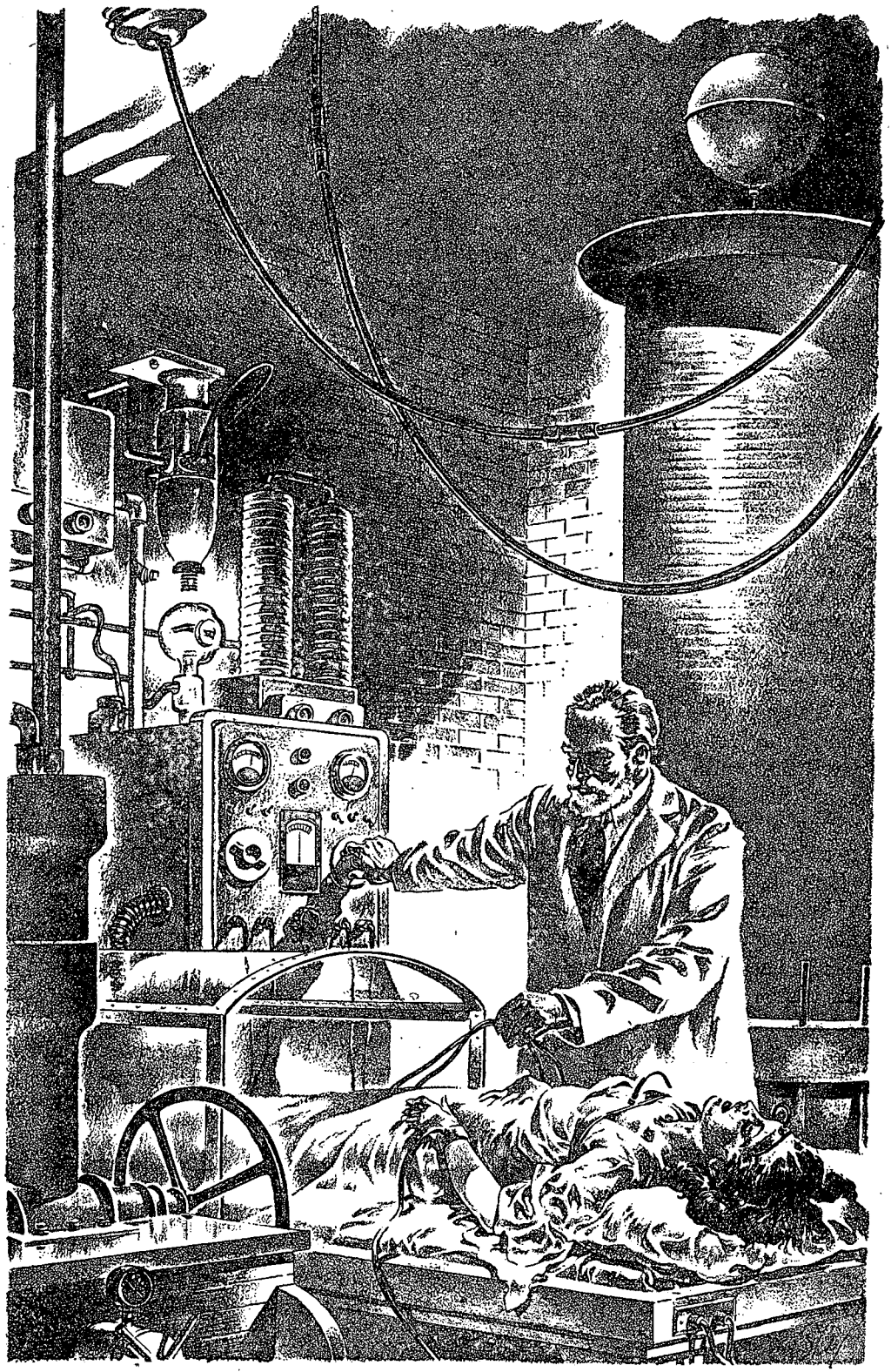

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tracted considerable curiosity. Since the cemetery was located at the center of a public square with houses all around, it was easy for the innumerable children to lay siege on me. I realized that this was done, not so much from mischievousness as from ignorance and lack of consideration. But it was very annoying indeed. Finally I was forced to lock myself in the tomb and always draw the curtains, lest Elena's peace be disturbed. This reticence on my part seemed to provoke the kids still more. Their language became quite insulting, they kept their shouting up for hours, and when I finally left, there always was a crowd, staring at me from across the cemetery fence. Several times I had talked to the boys and asked them kindly to leave off, but it was all in vain. Not knowing what to do, and after they had gone so far as to throw stones against my sacred tomb, I complained to the police.

This helped for a while. I was sorry I had been forced to take this step, but to tell the truth it never had occurred to me that people could be so much lacking in reverence as to disturb the peace of the dead.

One Christmas afternoon I had come earlier than my usual hour in order to take a photograph of the tomb. Later, when it had become dark and I was sitting inside, all of a sudden I felt hands feeling all over my face and head. I could not see anything but the touch was the familiar one of Elena's. That night at home I developed the picture I had taken. I had taken thousands of pictures with this self-same camera and it had never failed. This picture however showed a white shape, resembling a human figure as if outlined in a bright-white light, standing at the entrance of the tomb.

The constant nagging of the curious had irritated me so much that I changed my visiting hours farther into the night. It was the time of the full moon and the cemetery almost as brightly lit as in the daytime, so it could not have been that my eyes deceived me when on my next visit I saw a veiled, white figure at the entrance to the tomb.

As I came near, it started moving as if it had been waiting for me. I hastened to meet her but when I was only a few yards away, she disappeared through the locked door.

INSIDE the tomb I laid my hands on the casket and felt a strong electric current passing through my arm. The metal of this inner casket felt quite warm, almost of body temperature, whereas the outer casket was cold. The pleasing smell which emanated from the valve was particularly strong that night. As I always did, I held my hands over the valve into this beloved odor of my beautiful bride Elena. It was remarkable how long this odor clung to my hands; even washing would not remove it.

Within the next week the moon was waning fast, the nights became darker by end of the week, only a narrow sickle of the moon was left.

Ever since the moon began to vane, Elena had begun to sing in her casket with a very soft, clear voice which became just a little stronger from night to night. It was always the same old Spanish song about a lover who opens the grave of his dead bride. I could distinctly hear and understand its every word.

This always lasted for no longer than perhaps ten minutes and then she fell to silence as if expecting me to speak.

"Darling," I would then say, "very soon now the moon will change, the hour approaches when I shall take you home with me. I will clean you and wash you and I will put on your bridal

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dress, with veil and crown and all. Thus, as my beloved bride, you will stay with me forever."

Two days before the moon changed, as I left the tomb and was already outside the cemetery, I suddenly had the queerest feeling that Elena wished to communicate with me. Without a moment's hesitation I turned around and felt my feet not like moving but like being moved back to the grave. Thus walking I remembered that there was a problem which for days I had pondered in my head and that probably it was this matter she wanted to discuss with me.

Putting my mouth to the valve I said:

"You know, sweetheart, your coming with me must remain a deep secret and I have been wondering how we can keep it a secret. You see, this cemetery is surrounded by streets and by houses. It has several gates, but they are all in full view of the houses and automobiles are passing back and forth past the cemetery at all hours. People are curious. They are quite used to seeing coffins go into the cemetery, but they have never seen the dead come out again. If they see us, people might raise hell. What are we going to do about this, darling?"

After a while, haltingly, but firmly, came her voice:

"Go out of the tomb, Carlos, and I will show you how this can be done."

Now standing in front of the tomb, I viewed with great misgivings the scenery around, the fact that the tomb itself lay in full view of at least a dozen inhabited houses, also in full view of the street. There was a fence around the cemetery but it consisted of single rails and iron spikes so that it didn't hide anything and the street was not farther that perhaps forty feet away. Between Elena's tomb and the street there lay only one more grave, that of a woman and it had a mound, not higher than perhaps two feet, so this too did not offer any kind of cover.

While I was still pondering what possible solution there could be, Elena's voice spoke directly into my ear:

"You do it this way: when the moon changes, you bring along a very large blanket. You hang that blanket over the rail of the fence. Then nobody can see you from the street and from the houses, Carlos. The woman, my neighbor in the grave, she is my friend. She will be glad to help you."

Unmistakably Elena's spirit now used the full extent of its power over my nervous system. She directed my every step, I merely acted like a radio receiver to the waves which came from her. My mind was utterly relaxed. All I could think was "Splendid, this is going to work." All I had now to do was to work out some means, to find some kind of mechanical device with which to move the heavy casket across the lawn to the point on the fence which Elena had indicated. I could not possibly carry it, because the heavy metal was altogether beyond one man's strength. Once I had reached the shadow of the blanket, the further journey would be comparatively an easy one. From this point on I could proceed along a lane between two rows of graves which offered protection from sight.

AUTOMATICALLY my feet had been moved under Elena's direction to the fence, where I was to hang the blanket. Automatically now my feet were being guided by her through the dark part of the cemetery. This rehearsal of the drama in which I had to be an actor the following night was so perfect that it seemed to me as if the coffin were already following me. I just listened to her voice which guided me, which directed me in every turn so clev-

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erly that I was always kept out of sight from the houses and from the road. There was not the slightest difficulty; I proceeded as if I were running on rails.

Having crossed the cemetery in this manner, I felt my step being halted at the far end. The dark shadow of a deserted house loomed up directly in front of me and within its expanse there was an even blacker shadow, square, an open window. There were houses to the right and left of the deserted one, but none of them had a window opening toward the cemetery. The cemetery fence ran perhaps three feet away from the wall of these houses.

Again I heard her voice:

"Into this window you shall lift me; Carlos, and I shall be safe in this deserted house and from it, later, you can take me away in an automobile."

"Yes, darling," I whispered. "Everything shall be done exactly as you say."

I felt that she had left me. Nearby I found a small gate, one which I had never seen before. Passing through it, I went home.

The next morning, I went at once to where that little house stood and found that it was real. I was fortunate enough to rent it for a workshop and store house. Of course, I occupied it at once to make sure of my possession. Now I felt a tremendous relief. Happy, I walked through town toward the laboratory. In a shop window, while walking past, my eye was caught by a small but strong cart with rubber-tired wheels like children used to play with. Here again her voice called:

"On this little wagon you will ride me along."

I went into the store, asked to be shown the wagon, and soon convinced myself that wheels, axles and frame were strong enough to carry the coffin. That certainly would help a lot in carrying the load. So I bought it and had it sent to my little house along with some other things such as carpenters' tools, etc. Evening came and as darkness fell, I went to the tomb, taking my dark blanket and black rainsheet with me. Then depositing it inside, seating myself beside the coffin I rested. Her spirit seemed now attached to my own, but remained silent, listening perhaps. I spoke:

"Tell me, darling, will you truly come to me? Will you not fail to aid me at the last moment, as I must count on your support?" In a few minutes promptly came her reply:

"Yes, I will come with you and will help you."

At last now I was sure and contented, and I sang a little song for her quietly into her coffin. It was the old German melody:

"Come fly with me and be my wife, my heart thy resting place shall be," which I had written to her in a letter once before. And it was one of mother's favored songs.

I was prepared to risk my life, and to face any danger which would cross my path this night. There was no half way, this was clear to me. Once it was started it had to be carried out to a finish. This was my resolve. Besides, I did not know of a single person whom I could ask to help. Not a single human being I could trust who would be reliably discreet. And she would have to come out, if ever I was to take proper care of her.

CHAPTER VI

Elena's Liberation

AT LAST the new moon had come. The night was pitch dark, and promises to the dead are sacred and must be kept. It was Saturday and

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most people were walking around town, busily engaged shopping and going to shows at 8 o'clock.

I waited till 8:30 and then went to my little workshop; opening the window wide into the cemetery, I suspended the little wagon out over the fence from the window, also two rubber cushions and a couple of short towing-ropes. I then darkened the room, leaving open and locking the door behind me. I went out into the cemetery through that little street gate. I walked through the proper lanes between the graves until again I reached my window. I took the wagon down from the fence, along with the other things hanging there, put everything into the wagon and began pulling it along easily in the grass. But when it developed a very annoying way of rattling, I picked it up with its contents and carried it in my arms all the rest of the way to the tomb. The only illumination came from across the street. I unlocked the door of the tomb, and leaving the door wide open, I went down inside and spoke a few words into the coffin valve.

"Darling, I have come to fulfill my promise to you. Sleep now, darling, gently for a while, until you are with me. God bless you."

Then I screwed the valve shut tightly and took the inner metal coffin out gently, resting it obliquely on top of the larger outer coffin just for a few minutes. In the meantime, I took the dark blanket outside and hung it over the iron rail near the grave, exactly as she had advised. It was wise and excellent as I could now see, as it put the entire lower half of the entrance of the tomb into a protective black shadow.

On the threshold of the door I laid the rubber cushions so as to cover the uppermost step of the staircase inside. Everything was ready; before going down I took a last look around. I did not want witnesses. Satisfied that there was nobody prowling around I went down the stairs.

Inside, all of a sudden, the black crucifix above the head of her coffin shone into my eyes with a soft light which I had never seemed to have noticed before. I stepped toward it, made the sign of the cross, lifted it from the hook, kissed it: praying for my bride and for the protection of both of us, I promised to guard her and her sleeping soul and bring her back to safety with me.

Now I went to work, laying the crucifix on her coffin, and with new strength lifted it up high, I placed the foot end into the door entrance. The head end I was obliged to hold and push it slowly little by little further through the door opening until the entire length rested securely in the doorway. I now went up the stairs and pulled the coffin outside, behind the shielding blanket, into the soft grass. There, however, it could not stay for long, so I pulled it further around the corner of the tomb where it would be safer and out of sight. I slid the blanket from the railing and covered the bright, silvery coffin with it. Nobody could possibly see anything now because everything was black. I picked up the rubber cushions, closed and locked the tomb door.

My darling was now outside, ready and waiting the journey. Everything had gone well so far. With perfect ease I lifted the casket up on my little toy wagon, one foot high, with the rubber cushions one on each end, the blanket and crucifix covering the whole and partly trailing on the grass. With my ropes I tied the casket and wagon all around. With a short line attached to the beam I pulled the precious load from behind the tomb into the open section of the lawn in a straight line toward the dark portion of the main

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cemetery. Luckily, the wagon ran smooth and silent now under its load. It really was a wonderfully lovely journey through this black night along between the rows of graves, with my sweetest bride in her little metal chamber. Oh, it was immensely joyful and sweet, never to be forgotten. Serenely and calm I passed along, holding onto the reins of my hidden treasure passing noiselessly along by the two guardians of the Catholic ground. A wonderfully elated feeling took complete possession of my entire being, as though a second spirit had entered my soul. It seemed that a bodyguard of veiled angels had formed on both sides and were coming along with us and a great inspiration filled me then. It made me feel like a victor, holding the triumphal entry in a world forgotten and buried. I felt secure, protected and invulnerable. No matter what was coming against us now, nothing could harm either of us any more.

There was no place for the living here on this blackest of all nights.

ALL of the cemetery was alive with souls which came out of the graves from all sides, moving and thronging all around us. It was indeed like a festival among the departed, as they moved up on all sides. It was like a great divine wedding march for me, taking place. It could not be a funeral march for all seemed happy and joyful and interested. In silent admiration watching as the white forms of angels filed past with Elena and me in their midst. They were everywhere, none blocking our way, but all of them melting out of our way. It seemed as if they had never had such a celebration in this cemetery before. It was as if all were delighted and desirous to help us. The little cart, for all of its weight, seemed almost to run by itself. It responded to the slightest touch of my hand, which gave me the impression of being aided on by friendly hands, reaching out of the ground.

At last we arrived and had to halt. The cart could go no further. Here on this spot the whole beautiful vision disappeared. The coffin had to be lifted off the wagon, I had to carry it in my arms to the fence and put it down in the grass on the other side. This brought me to within a few feet of my open window. The coffin was now under the window, resting in the grass; I also rested for a few minutes to gather strength for my last, great effort. Meanwhile I removed the cart and things to safety, nothing was to be left around to tell the tale. I drew my dark blanket across the window sill with one end hanging out over the top of the wooden fence, to muffle any noise. Everything was ready now for the final lift, namely the raising of the head end, which was the heaviest, slowly up until it stood near the height of the window. This succeeded well; it stood Elena's body inside almost to an upright position, but this could not be avoided for just a few seconds. Then I lifted the coffin midway high above my shoulders and head, high enough so that it would clear the fence and blanket, and pushed it toward the open window. My back was toward the fence.

Suddenly the ground beneath my feet gave way. I lost my balance. It was as if all my strength had left me then. The whole load came down on my head, I crumbled under it and fell with the coffin lying on top of me, but my hands still, clamplike, held onto my precious load. This meant a tragedy if my strength would not return to me. The falling casket had squashed my new black felt hat on my head, pinning me down. Quickly realizing the danger that threatened and breathing heavily,

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I summoned all of my remaining strength. It must have been more, it must have been supernatural strength which flowed through me—my own had all been exhausted. Again I tried, lifting the casket slowly high above my head. Rising up, and with my back pressed hard against the fence, I pushed the heavy end of the casket inside the window. There it now rested safely, while the foot end still pointed out into the cemetery.

For a while I rested, unable to move a limb, but thanking all of the good souls and angels from the bottom of my heart. I did not realize it yet, but my head and hair was dripping and saturated with sweat and blood. Also my hands, sleeves, shirt, coat and trousers were likewise wet and sticky. It soon began to smell, however, strong and obnoxious. This woke me up and warned me that there was something wrong. I soon discovered that the bottom valve of the coffin above me, underneath the foot end, had fallen out: I suppose, from contact with the top edge of the fence. I still felt something dripping on my hand and shirt, running down my neck and over the woolen blanket, hanging over the fence, against which I was leaning. As the powerful odor was quickly spreading, the dogs in the neighborhood began barking. I raised myself up to go inside the house and then pull in the casket. Locking the door and lifting the coffin and blanket carefully on the floor, I tilted it in such a way as to prevent any more liquid from flowing out, I then plugged the hole up tightly with cotton.

Now I closed the window and made a light. My blanket was such an awful smelly mess that I had to wrap it many times securely into a parcel. My clothing and I, myself, were in the same state. There was no way for me but to take all my things off and wash them and myself with alcohol, since there was no water in the house. Still smelling strong, but more like liquor now, I closed up the house and went home by a long round-about way, so as to give the wind and air a chance to take away the odor and to dry my clothes. The odor, however, did not leave me, no bath even would remove it from my body.

I left the coffin at rest in the little house over Sunday. On Monday evening I placed it on the cushions of a large sedan car and some airplane-tanks, also propeller and parts for my airplane. Everything went fine; I arrived at the hospital grounds where the plane was without incident. This part of the hospital grounds, being behind the morgue, was quite deserted evenings. Undisturbed I had now moved my beloved into the cabin of the plane. She now had taken full possession of it.

CHAPTER VII

Experiments in Resurrection

HER wish had been fulfilled, and as Easter was close at hand, I made everything nice and cozy in her cabin. Her garments, bridal dress, veil, flowers, and jewels, shoes, stockings, everything was at hand, with plenty of money too. What more could my dearest girl wish for or have need of now? Gently, I slid the coffin aft from the pilot cabin into her's beneath the little curtained windows, which were all screened against insects. There was a tank of distilled water inside for washing and drinking, plenty of clean linen and sterile cotton. Everything medical had been provided for, including Carol-Dakin instillation apparatus with solutions and chemicals. Her cabin was really the hospital of the ship.

I started work, loosening all the hundred screws which were holding the cov-

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er of the casket tight. This kept me busy until midnight. The last four screws I left in place, one at each corner, because I intended to keep the casket closed until tomorrow.

The next night, shapping the latch of the doorlock behind me, locking myself in, I pulled the curtains across the windows and knelt down on the floor beside the coffin. The last four screws were easily removed. I carefully loosened the cover and lifted it up and hooked it against the ship's wall. I can hardly describe the picture which unfolded before my eyes. It was a horrible and a saddening sight to look inside the coffin after eighteen months in the grave. It was disheartening.

"My poor darling, how you have been neglected. Of course you could not help yourself and no one came to your aid. May God forgive me if I could not come to your aid in time to save you earlier. In your plight your beautiful eyes broke and sank without anyone coming to bring you help. Your beautiful dress, it has decayed and now it mars your beauty."

My very soul was tortured when I saw her awful condition. I resolved that I would help her out of this awful mess at once. She was my beloved bride, my promise to take care of her was a sacred one.

With the greatest care, I now detached the uppermost layers, which were overgrown and eaten up with slimy moulds. I then got a large bucket and deposited rags into it until it was filled. Carefully peeling off all pieces around the head, face and chest first, I found that many pieces had become glued to the skin. All of those which did not come off easily, I left on her body to soak for the time being, as it might injure her delicate skin, which I wanted to keep intact. The bucket was heaping full and heavy. It had to be removed quickly as the odor was overpowering. Then I prepared some soap solution and wetted all places and surfaces where rags were adhering to her body. Little by little the pieces loosened and came off, but not all of them that first night. Again and again I washed her body, tilting it carefully, first on one side, then on the other, so as to wash the back and remove the rags from underneath. I also removed all uncleanliness from the floor of the casket. The bucket filled up once more and had to be taken out. When coming back, I rinsed her body and also the inside of the coffin thoroughly, but I used phenol solution this time for disinfecting and to remove the last traces of odor. After that, I dried her entire body, drained the coffin and sponged it clean and dry.

I placed new rubber cushions all along her body which was firmly held together and still showed evidence of living loveliness. For the first time now, I could find a little time to rest, to examine her body and study its condition more thoroughly. I looked into the deep fallen cavities of the eyes, like deep, empty black holes, I saw her dried up lips, slightly parted with her white teeth gleaming between them. And when looking so long and deep into those black openings, where once her beautiful eyes shone so bright, it was strange indeed; it seemed as if a pair of pupils were forming again, deep inside, and were looking at me as from the bottom of a well straight and seriously.

And then I heard her soft voice speak into my ear:

"Now you will love me no more, will you?"

These words cut into my heart, like an arrow, they set me on fire with sacred love for her. I assured her:

"Darling, I love you more than ever before. If it were not so, I would not

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have taken you to me."

Then, kissing her dry lips, and breathing deeply into her lungs until her bosom rose, I unpacked her bridal gown and covered her body with it. I draped her with the silk veil and adorned her head and hair with a golden crown. She looked so wonderful now, I could not resist. The wondrous spell and trembling with burning love, I sank gently into the coffin to her and kissed her as if she were alive.

LONG I lay thus, holding her closely to me, the living and the dead united in love. The sweetness of this was divine. Never had I dreamt that she had preserved so sweet and intense a love for me after being in the grave so long. Was it possible? I could hardly grasp or believe it, but here was the undeniable evidence. Life and death united together, eye to eye. Long and silent we lay. We needed no words. Words could not express the heavenly bliss that we were experiencing. We were two kindred spirits flowing together. It was soul resting within soul. It was sweet and lovely beyond human words or understanding. God bless her soul and body.

Outside the night passed into dawn and still I held her head and body embraced. It was hard to tear myself from this wonderful heavenly spell. At last I raised myself and laid her gently on the cushions, promising to come back by night. Then covering her and lowering the lid carefully, without fastening it, I went home.

Throughout the day, however, I was haunted by conscience which said:

"Why didn't you stay with her? Why didn't you guard the ship?" It must have been her voice reproaching me. It was true, I had left her alone and unguarded, save by the cover and the ship. I could not visualize any danger to her though, as the cabin door was locked with triple locks. Besides I was badly in need of a cleansing bath before I went to work and furthermore, while cleaning the rags and mud away around her body, I had a number of microscopic slides taken with tiny specimen from various parts of her body, before cleaning it which I wanted to examine.

I went to the laboratory to examine them for bacteria. After I had finished the examination, I found her condition better than expected. There were no dangerous bacteria on any of the slides, just harmless infusoria and cilia. I felt sorry for any suspicion I may have had, although there was no real suspicion, only a little uncertainty. Anyway, I felt quite elated and happy over these results. Now I could sleep with greater peace and I think Elena also approved. My angel was pure, despite the mud and slimy rags in which she had been lying for so many months.

"Please, forgive me, darling," I prayed. "You are an angel in death, you are purer than many a living."

I do believe in Brahman wisdom, which gives a recipe for any incurable disease: namely, die and be buried for one year, then you will be cured. But there are very few who want to try it, but whether they like it or not, they will all finally have to take it anyhow. But the destructive agencies used by the embalmer will preclude any possibility of coming back again. At last Elena had been cured of her disease. She died from pulmonary tuberculosis, and I had always found plenty of bacilli in my examinations. There was no trace of them now. For her to die was to be cured from t.b. She was relieved of that evil which had destroyed her earthly life.

IT WAS the Easter morn of 1933. It was her resurrection indeed when

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divine love has gently lifted my bride from the grave. How sweet she still was, even though some of the ravages of eighteen months in the grave had not yet been removed. I washed her frequently with perfumed soap and spirits of wine, and Eau de Cologne, still loosening many bits of clothing from her body. Her beautiful hair also needed plenty of washing, as it was still partly glued together and to her scalp. By further examination I was not surprised to discover small maggots of the gnat-larvae type which were feeding on blood around her head and ears and on the surface of the abdomen. I removed them easily with phenol solution. The surface of the stomach region and the lower abdomen was partly damaged and lacerated. I treated it with healing lotions and sterile packing, just like living tissue. I also bandaged up toes, feet, and fingers as they had badly suffered in the soil and threatened disintegration. I moistened these bandages with formalin to arrest further decay for the present. I did not find any bad discharges. There was no putrefication anywhere on the body, although parts of it showed indication of losing binding element of tissues. I also found deficiency of alkaline elements which had been used up by the cells. I applied a fine powder all over the moist surface of the body, supplementing the lost calcium and sodium, neutralizing the skin to some extent, leaving it nice and dry and almost free from acid. Of course, I avoided any corrosives, alum, and other mordants on her. Instead I prepared solutions of a nourishing character with ingredients like olive oil or glycerine and others I wish to keep secret.

The idea of awakening her in this condition was out of the question. To my great joy, I noticed that her nose, which had been damaged through the handling of the coffin, had taken normal shape again after treatment and on exposing her to the air. When I first opened the coffin, the nose and eyes had apparently disappeared. Now the ridge was perfectly straight again where the bone had cut through the skin and septum. The outer nose had collapsed by the weight of the broken coffin lid when she was first buried.

Under the prevailing conditions, it was best to leave the body at rest. I must state right here, that I have seen living persons in worse condition than her body was now. If, however, she were to awake, it would cause another severe shock in her system, a second death probably, from which she could never awake again with this body. Only once is it given us; once only is it possible to live again in this body after death. When the body dies, the second time, nothing in the world is known, as yet, to bring life back again. The life in the enzymes has gone, and they are dead forever. The sinking of the soul into the body has the effect of preserving the vital power to resist the destruction of the enzymes. This action has proven itself sufficiently already. It also is apparent that there exists a connecting link between the metaphysical life forces and the atoms of the body, as the one influence responds to the other. It finally seems probable that the sleeping or dormant life force or soul is still being nourished or supplemented by the atoms and cells of the body.

For these reasons, and in consideration of her youth, I continued to give the body nourishment as long as possible. I also exercised a close chemical control over intake and exit to check on metabolism. There was, naturally, always a strong positive acid reaction from the tissues which often needed neutralizing. Youthful as she was, full

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of life, there was no fast dying of the forces of life, and with a little assistance, they will recover from the first shock, if the embalming process had not already caused their final or second death. It is too bad that the merciless, or rather murderous, ways of the so-called embalming make it absolutely impossible for a poor soul, surprised by death, to return to an intact body. Some undoubtedly attempt to return, but only experience another, the second, death shock and are unable to start the demolished machinery again, so then they die forever.

LIFE is indeed a battle. This statement is in order, as really we fight from beginning to end, until, one by one, we drop out of combat. This may be only for a spell, unless some "well-meaning" creature cuts and demolishes our vital organs in the meantime before we have had a chance to recover. If only relatives and undertakers would act with more consideration for the dead. It is safe to estimate that many thousands of unfortunates have been killed in the past by post mortem, embalming and too hasty burials. Modern science has advanced far enough to prove that death is not always final. In reality, death is just the first severe shock. Real or final death may follow, but not invariably. Of course, there are also many cases where recovery of life is impossible because the most vital organs are too far destroyed accidentally or by disease, and also some who even would not thank you for being brought back to life. In many cases, where death is not necessarily final, the relatives lose their heads. But the undertaker, who is bent on doing business, does not. Everybody is excited and rather impatient to get the poor unfortunate out of the way just as quickly as possible without further consideration. Of course, the undertaker is mainly interested in closing the deal, hence the indecent haste with which the body is removed and the embalming speeded up. This, although, I think, almost everybody would gladly pay the embalmer half the contracted fee, or even all of it, if their dear ones could be brought back to life. It would be desirable to give the dead a chance instead of depriving them of the last chance that God has given them. It is a fact, mostly forgotten in the hustle of this modern life, that thousands of certified dead have recovered from the grave. Thousands lying in graves would still be alive if humanity had more sense and tolerance.

As stated before, I had given Elena a letter when her coffin was closed by the undertaker. When cleaning the body after her disinterment, there was no trace of the letter to be found; it probably had been dissolved by the acids which were released by the body. Owing to the fact that no trace of it was found, I forgot all about it until later when looking through the records I found a copy of it, and as its contents have been transformed in actual accomplishment, there is no more reason for keeping it secret. It follows:

Key West, 26-10-31
(date of burial)

Elena, my Darling Elena:

My love for you is greater than ever. You are now free from all of your fetters, and you are free to go where you wish. Elena, please, come to me, sweetheart. I long so much for you, tell me, what shall I do? As I cannot live without you, will you have me darling? Then take me or you come to me and stay with me until I can go with you, my sweetheart, Elena.

Your own Carl.

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I had begun feeding her body orally with nourishing fluids regularly every day. When I gave her too much of one kind, she usually expelled it, so I changed over to other types of food the next day. Finally the body adjusted itself to certain quantities which she would keep absorbed. Deliberately I used only gravity feeding as the only safe way. By this method, the body recovered considerably and gained twenty pounds in weight. The treated tissues healed. After one month I removed the bandage and splints from the nose. It had knitted firmly and now she looked as beautiful as when she was alive. Lacerations on the cheeks and temple also had disappeared. I was obliged to correct her left arm which had been lying across the stomach when she was buried. The Negroes who had filled the grave had tramped stones and earth on the top of the coffin with such a force that they had broken the lid of the box and casket. This had settled down on this arm and on her face, causing a deep groove across the abdomen which also required treatment. The arm itself had suffered strangulation of its tissue vessels, as had the abdominal vessels. The whole arm had to be straightened slowly at the elbow and shoulder joint. This I accomplished by a counterweight with a cord over a pulley on the ceiling, fastened to a bandage on the wrist. It applied a gentle tension until the arm automatically took the required position below the hip joint.

The groove across the stomach straightened itself out under treatment with hot solutions, in addition to warm internal infusions into the stomach and intestinal tract. It took quite some time, but I noticed with a great deal of satisfaction, how gratefully the body responded and returned to healthy form and appearance. Even the expression of her face changed to divine happiness. She did not require words to express herself. Her face was so much more eloquent than words could be.

Weeks and months passed. With the same routine of feeding and instilling vitamins into her body, she improved daily and even her living expression returned. It was my daily happiness and supreme joy to admire this phenomenon and I decided to make a plaster cast of her, so as to have a permanent and nonperishable record. In order to make certain and to be sure that one, at least, would turn out perfect, I made several casts. I discovered that the fine oiled silk which I had used to cover and protect her face, eyes, and hair, had fastened itself tightly to her skin. I left it so and painted over it with a thin solution of bees' wax and balsam. Being transparent, her eyebrows showed through delightfully. I did not dare to pull it off her beautiful face, as the plaster of paris, when setting, had pressed it so tightly against the surface of the skin. She looked as beautiful as ever and it looked like her own skin. It also proved an effective protection against ever-present insect pests and microbes. Later, after incubation of her body, I had to extend this same protection all over her body; only in this way was it possible to completely free her from those pests, which always doggedly found a way to attack her and cheat my rigid precautions, as I had to take her out of the incubator some day.

Her face expressed the divine peace she was enjoying, and happiness which I could only attribute to dormant life in her body which, like a crystalline solution will revert to its original form when letting it stand at rest. Her hair, which had been flat and lifeless in her coffin, had become alive again, taking its own characteristic waves and curls. Her hair even regained its electric proper-

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ties; being attracted to my hands when they came near it. No matter what the cause, it indicated life, though different than before. It does not react as quickly as ours because we are alive. The body reactions do not come as rapidly as before death, owing to deficient motor nerves. Still, the answer comes; slowly of course because the body now stands under the law of eternity for which a year of our lives may be no more than a second.

CHAPTER VIII

The Laboratory on the Beach

IN THE meantime great changes occurred in the hospital. The good, old commander of the Naval Station, of which the hospital was a part, had died. It had been he who had given me permission to build my airplane on the grounds. His successor, a much younger officer, promptly cancelled it. There was nothing for me to do but to move the ship to another location. I did not live at the Marine Hospital any more, though officially I was still listed as "on furlough." A place was offered to me right on South Beach where I could build my residence and airplane hangar. I had the plane trailed through town, with my Elena resting comfortably in her cabin. The way leads past the old home of her people, who once more waved a goodbye to us, not knowing of course how near their daughter was to them. It was a real triumphal ride for Elena as, in her flower-decorated cabin, she reclined behind the curtained windows, victor over her grave, radiantly beautiful and happy in her liberation from the grave, perhaps for good if we kept the devils away.

There was no house down by the beach where we could live, so I had to share the cabin with Elena to protect her against prowlers and thieves. Nothing was safe from the beachcombers at that time. There was a long concrete pier reaching into the water. On the land side, there were still a few broken cement walls standing from an abandoned factory, which I intended to use in the construction of my hangar building and laboratory for biologic research and X-ray work.

My first work was to level the ground. This done, I rolled the plane into the ruins. Mario Matina, who had married Elena's sister Nana, helped in doing this. Now I began to build with rocks, cement, beach sand and sea water a square of walls, with a large opening on the leeside, large enough for the plane to get out of the building and onto the wide cement runway slip. I had built the plane strong enough so that I could construct my beams from the top of the walls across the middle, allowing them to rest temporarily on the plane, so as to form a working floor for erecting the roof. After the roof was supported and fastened securely on top of the cement walls I freed the ship of its additional load. I did all of this work myself, in addition to attending to Elena inside the ship, as best as I possibly could. It gave me great satisfaction to build this lab, for, was it not for her sake, all of this work? Yes, and I always had the feeling that she was helping me. She was indeed helping me with all the money I had piled up around her lovely form. She knew that this was to be her castle, her birthplace for a new life, from where she would fly away with me across this wide expanse of ocean to a better world.

There was still metabolism in her body, as the chemical reactions indicated, and this would require attention. There was always a surprise awaiting me when I opened her casket; particularly so when she had been sealed up. She certainly did not like that. I was

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glad when at last the house was finished and I could leave her exposed to open air. There was no more danger of deterioration except from insects which I kept away with double screens. In an airtight metal container, the gases exhaled by the body are not carried off by diffusion but accumulate and condense into liquid form. This corrosive liquid attacks body tissues as well as the metal container, except under proper laboratory conditions where the gases are carried away by a pumping apparatus.

Having laid the concrete floors, I divided the building into two sections, one side for the hangar with workshop, the other half for a laboratory, and one room where I placed my bed, a large table, the organ, and my books. In the laboratory, I installed my million volt transformer in the middle of the floor so it would be clear of the walls and roof beams. Against the front stonewall I placed my large X-ray machine and operating table. Along the windows on the north wall I arranged the examination bench with microscopes, scales, etc. Along the division wall I mounted shelves all the way up to the top for bottles, chemicals, glassware and other supplies, with a long bench in front for analytical work. This then was the new setup where I lived all alone with my Elena. There was only one neighbor, a harmless and a friendly man named Frank. Frank was an Italian fisherman who had built his own shack up against the wall of my building, as he wanted to be with me. Inside of the large hangar I installed my electric generating plant with switchboards right against the sea wall. This supplied all the light and power which I required; I wanted to be independent of the city electric system. The hangar could be closed up with two folding steel doors as high as the surrounding walls. The clear space above, forming a high gable, which I closed up with numerous window panels, admitted plenty of light into the entire building in addition to the windows below.

IT WAS with great relief that at last I had my equipment in working order and ready to use. My most important work was now to assemble all parts of the incubator which I had built in the Marine Hospital. Here, now, with my electric power plant I could finally set it in operation, something which had been delayed too long already.

All work up until now had been for the purpose of arresting and delaying further deterioration of the body tissues. Mummification had partly set in. This, however, is not beyond resurrection. The revival of the dried-up cells merely consumes more time and I never give up hope while I have a will. Now I began mixing up plasma solutions in sufficient quantities, adjusting, testing, cooling and heating elements. I also tested the circulating pumps and electron cell, sterilizing everything, including rubber and glass connectors. And last but not least, came my sweet, patiently waiting darling herself. I placed her gently into the incubator tank on a thick layer of white felt and filled the entire tank with a clear solution of oxyquinoline sulphate of sodium at a temperature of 38 centigrade, blood heat. In this solution I left her for twenty-four hours, then draining the incubator by opening the bottom valve, I refilled the tank, while the body was still wet and warm, with plasma solution of body temperature. While the tank was filling, of course, the tube of the pump intake was connected to the plasma tank until the incubator was filled up and overflowing through the foot valve into the filter and recharging tank. The outlet tube was then connected with the

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plasma vessel. This fluid was thus kept circulating automatically twenty-four hours a day at a temperature of 37 centigrade. Once each day I raised her body out of the incubator and permitted her to rest a little. Then I placed her on my X-ray table for a five minute radiation with high voltage, 3 mill. Amp. 1 mm Alum. filter and then returned her immediately into the circulating plasma bath.

This process I intended to keep up as routine as long as possible, checking up on the temperature and reaction of the fluid every day, adding distilled water, glucose, saline, calcium, or whatever else was needed. Sometimes I had to neutralize the solution by adding hydrochloric acid.

As weeks passed on, I noticed to my great joy and satisfaction how her form had filled out and developed. Her living contour was again restored, and she had added weight. Her limbs were filling out and her beauty became radiant, her expression showed serenity and happiness. It impressed me so much that it kept me spellbound to gaze at her over and over again in silent rapture. It had become my supreme joy to see her daily and lift the veilings to have another look at her and to see how divinely beautiful she had developed. Often I kissed her rosy lips while she was lying in her bath, thereby getting always a liberal taste of the surrounding fluid myself, which is indeed an analysis.

With horror I remembered her appalling condition when I had first taken her from the grave. With happy confidence I could now look forward to the time when I could take her out of the bath for good. Owing to some remaining defects on her left finger and right toe, caused by the burial, I wanted to continue until her total weight would reach one hundred pounds. She now weighed ninety pounds: that meant that a gain of sixty pounds had been achieved since the beginning of the treatment. Every evening now I sat at the organ and played to her the music she loved: Beethoven, Bach or Wagner. It was not only my own fancy, but more than that: it was a means to apply the cosmic laws of vibration through harmonic sound waves. These aside with electric waves which have positive action in a status nascendi during the formation of atomic structure. There is nothing mystical or magical about this; no, it's exact science. Needless to say, vibrations of divinely inspired harmonics differ a great deal from the vulgar kind which have destructive action.

UNFORTUNATELY I was again greatly troubled by the outside world. The W.P.A. got busy with laborers to clean up the whole terrain and then build wooden sheds and cabanas near my place. Stealing and pilfering now became all too frequent. The entire area became unsafe, complaints were of no avail. Consequently the building could never be left without a guard. Either Frank or myself had to remain there to watch the place. As the conditions kept getting worse, I found it necessary for Elena's safety to interrupt the incubation, temporarily at least. Stones had been thrown through the glass windows into the room where the incubator stood. So I lifted her out, dried her with alcohol and Eau de Cologne, emptying all of the plasma fluid into glass bottles and dismantling the incubating assembly, sterilizing and packing it away. There was no way of knowing when I would be able to resume incubation, while W.P.A. had a free hand here.

She was not embalmed now after her tissues had been resurrected by the in-

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cubation period. Although her body was sterile enough, she was not safe from insects. For this reason I thought it better to extend the silken layer, protection all over her body to make sure that insects should find no exposed skin surface, and also to retard dessication. When I had completed this, I dressed her in silken garments again, with her bridal dress and veils and the crown of gold and adorned her with all her jewels and white gloves. I kept her thus, lying in state in her large bed, with flowers about her head. It was the bed I had bought for her and in which she had died. Oh, how marvelously beautiful she now looked with the white silk lace veils covering her down to her feet. She was so precious to me that I would take no risks. To guard her day and night I slept right along side of her at night, and in the daytime hardly ever went out, except to get my mail. In that case I always locked my room securely, as well as the house, the bed was always screened with treble screens. Not even Frank had ever seen her and did not know of her presence. No visitors could ever see through those screens and discover the beautiful secret. Like Ayesha in her mountain she was hiding behind the curtains, watching everything through her veils with her far-seeing eyes. I had sealed her ears loosely with sterile cotton which would still transmit sound waves, also her nostrils with a filter which admitted air.

Wholly absorbed as I was in this, my secret life with Elena, I hardly noticed how the months passed and the years. The outside world concerned me only when it threatened us, as it did when in 1935 the big hurricane swept over Florida.

Reports from Cuba and the United States weather bureaus predicted the storm center as coming in a straight line toward Key West from the southeast. My instruments also indicated that it was approaching this way, and heading straight for South Beach where my house stood. All of Key West had been preparing for the approaching storm, closing shutters, windows and shops. All of the cabanas had already been closed up. Therefore, Frank and I hastily boarded up every window and outer door against wind and sea pressure and sand. As the building was only one foot above the high water mark, and the hurricane would raise the water up to probably ten feet, I reinforced the entrance with strong timbers. On the inside I had large crossbeams bolted down between the cement walls of the house and also between the cement floor and the roof beams of the gable. In addition, I wheeled the plane up against the inside door beams and blocked up its wheels to put a back pressure against the doors.

We, Elena, I and Frank the fisherman of the beach, were locked in for the duration of the storm. My two cars, for which there was no room inside of the building, had to be left outside and exposed to the full fury of the storm. My sailboat and Frank's skiff were high and dry up on the sand close to the building. The long row of wooden cabanas and the shed belonging to the W.P.A. were all doomed to be swept away. Only the cement walls of my building could withstand the storm. Inside, I was obliged now to pack away my books and papers, microscopes, etc. up on the shelves close to the roof for safety. Elena had to be wrapped in her silken quilt as she was. I laid the crucifix on her breast and placed her in the steel casket and closed it up so she could be lifted up into the roof loft at a moment's notice if the water should rise too high inside. The organ and all heavy machinery and electrical equipment could not be moved.

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MY BAROMETERS showed rapidly falling air pressure all day long and were still sinking hour by hour. The northwest wind blew a howling gale and it was plain to see that the hurricane was coming on. Near nine o'clock in the evening, the noise of the rattling windows and shutters and the large steel gates became a deafening roar; we could not hear ourselves speak anymore. The full force of the storm would be here in a couple of hours. I was determined to face it conscious. Frank was convinced that we were doomed but laid down in his bunk facing his fate like a stoic. I went into my room and sat down beside Elena's casket, and, with both of my arms clasping it, I said:

"Elena, my darling, we are alone on this shore. The hurricane may free us both from this life, but we will cling together faithfully, you and I and our God. Death will not harm us, nor separate us any more. He, who has given you to me, will not reject our souls, united as they are in His undying love."

Then, seating myself at the organ beside the coffin, I began to play, while the barometer on the wall was still sinking rapidly. I began with soft dulce the sacred Good-Friday-Spell from Wagner's Parsifal. It was hardly possible to hear the sound over the roar of the hurricane, but in my soul I heard every note. Then I added Vox Celeste on the second movement. It sounded very sweet, like a chorus of angels in the high heavens, while the satanic chorus of the gale screamed against the heavenly voices of love eternal, like in a great battle.

On and on I played. My soul was all in it; now I added more voices to give the heavenly spell more power until gradually I had full organ with increasing forte. It was then as if heaven itself lent the strength of the forte to these harmonics of eternal love. At that moment nothing existed for me but the great sound which flowed from mine and Elena's souls united with the organ. And as the organ tones diminished in the finale, dying out faraway into the heavens with the faintest pianissimo, there was silence outside; the great battle of nature had come to an end.

On account of this profound silence at first I thought that I had lost my sense of hearing during this battle. I waited for a while, then I arose quickly to find out what had happened. Looking at my barometer I noticed with joy that the air pressure was rising rapidly. Then I bent down kissing Elena's coffin, embracing it, and saying:

"Elena dear, God bless you. He saved Key West and all of us! Thank God."

I went out to Frank's room on the far end of the building, calling to him:

"Frank, it is all over now!"

As in a daze the old fisher stared at me:

"I heard you play the organ. It sounded like Holy Mass in church, so I prayed. But Doc, it's all so still now, will the storm come back again?"

"No, it will not. You can safely go to sleep now. Good night, Frank."

At midnight the wind began gently to blow from the south, indicating that the center of vacuum was about forty to fifty miles from this beach. The hurricane had taken a sharp turn in a northerly direction out to sea; it had by-passed us. Satisfied now and feeling tired I slept peacefully all night.

The next day came the sad news of the great destruction wrought in the upper Keys of Matecumbe and Tavernier, where the hurricane finally crossed over into the Gulf after suddenly turning away from Key West. Great havoc was caused there to the veterans' camp

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and other settlements, destroying the highway and railroad bridges. It had taken over four hundred lives.

The hurricane had isolated Key West entirely from the mainland. After opening our barricaded doors and windows again, I found no damage outside except that a thirty foot fishing cruiser was facing me head on. It had been hurled upon my cement slip. The gale had torn it away from its anchor in deep water and stranded it here, a total wreck. On the other side of my building my two cars were still standing, but minus a brand new tire and rim which, however, could not have been taken by the storm. There are always some people who are hiding their misdeeds by a storm. It is being held responsible for everything even though it did not even hit Key West. One nearby cabana had been burglarized and all its goods and supplies taken during that night. It belonged to a countess, visitor from California.

After the danger was past, I opened Elena's casket and placed her back in her bed. Now she could absorb fresh air. The W.P.A. works on the beach were resumed, which made it impossible for me to use the incubator for my Elena. Under these circumstances the dessication required attention. Every second or third day I gave her an oral infusion whenever her lips became too parched, but not more than one glassful, so that her beautiful array should not be soiled. I knew that this was hardly enough to keep the body cells alive, but I hoped that at some later day I would be able to complete her incubation and then tap her circulation for a transfusion with living blood. I knew that she had lost some of her own blood lately. When she was in the incubator, I noticed that the circulating fluid had taken a reddish color, a result of her blood becoming mixed with the fluid in the tank. As the fluid had been clear before, I examined it under the miscroscope which revealed the presence of blood cells.

CHRISTMAS of 1936 was now approaching, I prepared, as always, her little Christmas tree, decorating it with silver tinsel, cotton snow and with small wax candles instead of electric bulbs. I placed the tree on a bench beside her bed with little gifts, such as picture books, chocolate, cakes, cookies, perfume, soap, face powder, etc., which she liked when alive. For me she will never die, but will live on with me, and I shall always treat and respect her as a living person.

On Christmas Eve I lit the candles on the tree, there were just thirteen of them, and placing her crucifix nearby I told her:

"Elena! It is Christmas!" Then taking my seat at the organ I played "Silent Night" until the lights on the tree were burned down. Going to her bed and seating myself beside her, I lifted her veil and kissed her on her lips:

"Elena, darling, we are all alone in this world—you and I and our God—but we are happy and contented. Let us stay together forever."

There was a small bottle of Rhine wine on the table, another Christmas gift. I opened the bottle, filled one glass; raising it with a prayer to our God for his blessing. I drank half of it and drew the other half into my mouth. Lifting her veils again, I pressed my lips firmly against hers which were open just a little. Thus slowly I forced the wine into her mouth, until I felt by the passage of air that it had entered her stomach safely. The air from my lungs entered hers and caused her bosom to rise. I released my lips and she breathed the air out again, but retained

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all of the wine, not a single drop spilled on her bridal array. I used this method of feeding her at different times with certain solutions when I wanted to be sure they went home where I wanted them to. Of course, there was no risk of infection whatever, as Elena's body was now aseptic. Her nostrils were sealed with cotton but her ears were now open. While seated close to her, I noticed what seemed like a faint breathing movement of her breast, and by looking closer I found just a few drops of fresh blood running out of the corner of both eyes and both ears. I had to get some cotton to wipe it off and deposit it on a couple of microscopic slides. No further discharge was visible. I got my stethoscope to listen to her chest for a while. There was no regular heart-beat, but there was a sound of flowing liquid in the vessels, then a pause, then a sound of flowing again with some kind of an irregular flutter in between.

Her body was still warm to the touch since the incubation, but she had already lost considerable of her blood temperature. It was only natural that she was gradually cooling out again. To slow this down as much as possible I covered her over completely with the blue silk quilt, at least for the duration of the cool weather.

During the night, I meditated for hours about this fresh red blood. What did it mean? Why should she emit blood without any blood pressure in her system? I decided to make a further investigation, and the next day I found that a scant menstrual blood discharge had taken place. Also fresh red blood had leaked from the saphenous veins on her legs, which had to be cemented with silken patches. It was all-important now to keep her safe by retaining all of the liquids in her body. With all those gangs of workers disturbing the quietude of our beach, I had to be prepared to place her back again in the hospital cabin of her airship and to take her away to a safer place.

The W.P.A. had obtained the beach from the city to improve it. Most unfortunately the person in charge of this work held a personal grudge against me, because I refused to contribute to certain cheap politicians, whose main object was to make money. These political bosses were determined to drive me from my house; in fact, they had me dynamited from my home. They, however, had no knowledge of my holy secret which I was guarding so patiently.

One morning my walls were shaken by the big explosions. The great concrete pier close to my house had been blown up by them. This made it impossible to live there any longer in safety. My house, now no longer protected from the sea, had to be abandoned. I received no compensation for this loss, nor provided with another house I could move into, which absolutely amounted to persecution.

At last I found another building which was large enough, where I could move in with all my possessions. There was a scarcity of houses at the time and I was glad to take it, although it was not a suitable place for my laboratory and hangar. It took me and Frank a full month to pack up and to move my twenty truck loads of equipment, from April 30th to May 28th, 1936.

ELENA, of course, was placed comfortably in the cabin of her plane. Now, with the plane hitched to my car, I taxied the airship slowly along the coast on Roosevelt Boulevard to the building on Flagler Avenue. She was the last to leave. It was a large shed, situated among bush and jungle scenery. As it consisted of only two small

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rooms beside the shed, I made one of them the bedroom and the other a laboratory and storeroom which, however, could only hold my X-ray equipment. The organ I placed in the bedroom, also my books, a writing table and the microscopes, etc. Frank, who had moved with me, rigged up a table, seats and shelves and some sort of a camp stove in the garage building where he could cook to his heart's delight. The three boats Frank sailed over and anchored them beside the nearby laguna among the mangroves. Here he could go out fishing as usual, catching crawfish and plenty of other kinds; but his beloved conch shells were rather scarce in this locality. Close to the house and kitchen, we planted vegetables, papayas, bananas, lime and cocoanut trees; there was plenty of wood here to keep the fire going. The kitchen door, opposite the main building, we always left open as a shelter for our dogs which guarded our home.

When everything was nice and clean inside the tiny bedroom and the doors and windows had been tightly screened, I opened the airplane to take out my secret treasure. I would not leave her a minute longer lonely by herself. Carrying her in my arms, I placed the coffin on my table and opened the six padlocks. After unfolding of the new blue silk quilt, she came out beautiful, radiant as ever with her jewels, flowers and bridal array. Here she could now breathe fresh air again, which she needed as the air inside had acid odor.

My power generating machinery could not be installed at the new place; I was unable to use it, consequently, I could incubate no more until I had built another laboratory. I decided that it was best to leave Elena exposed to the open air for a time. I knew well that it was impossible to prevent desiccation of the tissues, and that mummification would finally take place, because the small quantities of liquids I could infuse would not be sufficient to prevent it. But as long as I could prevent re-infection of the body tissues with bacteria, I was satisfied. There was nothing to prevent re-incubation later on, the most important thing now was to protect and guard her carefully against destruction.

In her big bed, covered by double and treble screens all around and a waterproof tent above it, she was secure and she looked comfortable and contented just as if she knew. And I am positive that she did know she was lying on her own mattress on which she died and was inviting me to her side. Now I slept by her side to be close to her and to protect her from insects and other dangers, as I had promised her I would do. She could not feel any injury but I could feel it for her. Whenever I discovered another leakage, I sealed it up right away with silk and wax, to stop any plasma from running away. When any part had shrunk in by the loss of fluids, I filled it up with soft sterile cotton packing and overlaid it with silk and wax. Now she could get no more radiation as I had no electricity yet, except my small windmill generator on top of the kitchen which was barely enough, when there was any wind, to keep my automobile batteries charged.

Every evening I played organ music for her and in the morning, when I had cooked my breakfast, consisting of eggs, toast and Lipton's tea, I carried it into her room and placed it on her little bedroom table. Lifting the veil I invited her:

"Come, darling, join my breakfast, our wedding breakfast."

Then, sitting down, I ate in perfect peace and contentment as I felt that she was with me and could see me. I always experienced a feeling of harmony and silent happiness as though

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an angel were present.

Generally at noon, Frank came back from his trip with nice fresh fish and made a fish dinner with potatoes and cabbage or macaroni, so we both had our dinner in the "dog kitchen," so called by me as my dogs claimed it as theirs. These dogs, a mixture of shepherd and pointer, were very much attached to me. They consisted of Granny, the head of the dog-family, and her children, a male and a female, the latter became the mother of thirteen fine, healthy pups. Granny, who was very intelligent, begged me a few times to let her come into Elena's room. When I saw how interested and anxious she seemed to be, I let her in to satisfy her curiosity. She nosed her way past the X-ray machine, then past the organ, straight to Elena's bed and sat down there, looking up at the screen expectantly and wagging her tail, then, looking at me, as if to say:

"Let me see what you have there."

I told her:

"This is your mistress, Granny, and she also likes dogs, but don't wake her up now. You may look at her through the screen, that's all." At this she raised up to a sitting position, holding her paws carefully in the air so as not to touch the bed and looked through the screens. That was all she wanted. She was satisfied now and I told her:

"You watch and guard your mistress always."

All these animals proved to be good friends and always kept a faithful watch.

ON THE 29th day of July, 1936, I woke up early in the morning. My eyes were wide open, I was in the full possession of my senses and faculties. No matter what people will think or say: I was ready to go out and report the news to the press that Elena had at last re-awakened to life. This re-awakening was so real that I convinced myself it was not just an apparition or imagination. It was her own real body, her own personality.

As I looked at her, I noticed the fingers of her right hand moving, and on taking her hand in mine, I felt how it relaxed and became soft again. Immediately thereafter her whole arm lifted itself up and her hand pressed firmly against my face and lips as she used to do when alive, so that I should kiss it. When I kissed her hand, she opened her eyes and looked at me intently. Then, turning herself on her side toward me, she attempted to get up. I was fully awake and became alarmed, fearing that she would collapse and fall, so I spoke to her quietly:

"God bless you, Elena. I am so happy you are awakened from your long sleep."

She answered:

"I've come to you to stay for a while and keep you company."

"Elena," I answered, "it is five years that I have waited by your side for your awakening, now don't be too hasty in getting up. It may exhaust your strength, my darling. Wait a little and I will make you some hot beef tea to strengthen you."

I went out at once and made hot beef tea from Liebig's Extract. When I returned in a few minutes to give her the beef tea, I found here in a state of rigidity, but still in the same position in which I had left her and looking toward me. I turned her gently back on her cushions to straighten her and gave her the hot beef tea, tasting it first myself as usual. Then I waited by her side for some time, but she remained motionless; so it transpired that this wonderfully happy awakening had ended.

It gave me a lot to think of. This was metaphysical from every angle. Critic-

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ally gathering and analyzing my own thoughts and movements during this phenomenon in order to detect any possible fault on my part at this crucial moment, which might have caused her to revert to her former state.

Was it perhaps my hesitation in the face of this unexpected phenomenon taking place? Of course, there were the physical reasons, such as the absence of blood pressure.

Or was it because I left her side that her life ebbed away?

I had heard of similar cases in my psychological studies, all of which I weighed carefully. I remembered now that, when I saw her move, my heart was beating so powerfully strong and loud for joy that I thought it would burst. This seemed natural and also in such a case, that my first duty consisted in helping her. The possibility that it all had been a dream had to be ruled out by finding her still in the same position.

I could not help feeling remorse at the thought that I may have failed somewhere to assist in the accomplishment of a miracle, and permitted it to come to naught. The mystery of the missing link in the metaphysical chain will eventually be found, I am sure, obscure as it is at present. I think I can see where it can be found.

At the present time, with all of my electrical indicating and other scientific instruments dismantled, I cannot make accurate experiments, not until such a time as I have another laboratory building. For the time being, I can only confine myself to recording events as they occur by observation.

LEFT in charge of this end of the island of Key West by Mr. Porter, I often made inspection tours around a mile in all directions. In doing so, I discovered a wild garden of flowering myrtle bushes, growing profusely among the jungles. These evergreen bushes were loaded with strong fragrant, little white flowers. Every day when returning I brought home with me bunches of those sweet smelling flowers and placed them around Elena's head. I often placed a whole wreath of them over her hair, besides placing vases full of them on her bed table and my writing desk, and they perfumed the entire room. After a while I discovered that she had absorbed the fragrance of the flowers and exhaled it. Finally she, her bed, the organ and everything smelled like this exquisite perfume.

Work was to be done now; my boats needed attention. I could not remain in this place forever, because I needed a laboratory again for my special research work. I intended to buy land on another island where I could build as soon as I had sufficient capital. I needed my boats for the transportation of my goods. I thought that I would fit up the large boat with a cabin for sleeping accommodations for three persons besides cargo space, and equip it with sails as well as motor power. I also intended to equip the sail boat with a motor and add a cabin, as I intended to use it as a fishing boat in all kinds of weather. It was very strong and safe and could serve as an excellent life boat.

While faithfully attending to Elena, I found that more leaks had developed where plasma had run out onto the muslin gauze with which I had wrapped her body beneath her garments. It was strange that this should occur despite the precaution which I had taken of sealing her entire body with silk and wax; I made a thorough examination. It revealed that the leaks were caused by a very small insect larvae of the gnat type, a blood sucker, which had drilled

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several pin holes through those protective walls in order to feed on plasma. So my good lady had to take a bath of chinosol for a few hours, so as to remove any hiding larvae. This also contracted the perforations. After being dried with alcohol and Eau de Cologne those pin holes had to be sealed up again. Then I discovered that I was all out of silk. My supply had become depleted and here Elena came to my rescue by saying to me:

"Take my bridal dress. It's soiled anyhow."

I answered:

"That's a good idea, darling, I will take your bridal dress and cut out the soiled parts and there will still be plenty silk left, and I will buy a new one for you tomorrow."

Now I had more than enough silk to cover her entire body for the second time and I proceeded to do so from her neck to her feet. This layer I sealed again with wax and balsam. She was doubly secure in her two silk skins. Her body was lovely and smooth, like the skin of an infant, and she was all ready to be dressed up again. Once more I bought her a beautiful golden colored silk dress, trimmed with white silk lace; it matched the gold in her twenty-two carat golden crownlet and with fragrant white myrtle wreath around her auburn hair. Where was there ever such a lovely bride? I doubled the veils and tucked them carefully around her entire form inside her large bed, in order to double the protection of the surrounding mosquito curtain. Now I was contented and could relax and sleep well at night, knowing that she was safe. I then had a remarkable dream which I wrote in a letter to my sister; here is the copy:

Key West, June 1st, 1938.

Dear Sister:

Last night I had a dream but it seemed more like reality. I spent the whole night with father and mother. Elena, too, was with me and at my right side; Mother was at my left, and Father was facing me. We were all happy. Father appeared to be quite young. We were talking quietly and peacefully, when Elena, who had been in a death-coma like, woke up suddenly. She rose up and stood before us stretching herself, smiling as happy as a child. Surprised, I warned her to be careful as she was weak after lying down for so many years. She answered:

"Oh no, Daddy. I am calling you Daddy because you look older than your father. I am strong now. I can walk safely. Oh, I am so happy."

"All right, darling," I said, "Father will assist you and see that you don't fall."

It was wonderful to see her elation in this new world. She was wearing a new pink dress. The color of her eyes had changed from dark brown to blue. Father still had his blue-grey eyes and Mother had her brown eyes, but her hair was still dark brown. I noticed that nobody's feet touched the ground. In fact, there was no ground. We were standing in space. The most serene peace prevailed and seemed to penetrate the very atmosphere. There was a distant sound immensity, eternity, millions of harmonies from this endless space striking the very foundation of our souls, it moved our souls deep down. This really was the home of souls. This newly found home I got into was such a perfect reality, that on waking this morning, I realized how miserable this short life is down here, which luckily lasts but a brief spell. It seemed to me like an ugly dream which really it is, while there is true eternity, the infinite goal of our real happy existence forever.

It impressed me so powerfully at

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awakening, when returned from that brightest space of heaven into this gloomy little room called our earthly life; it almost disgusted me to be back in this life's troubles and miseries. The Indian Sanskrit calls it "Devachan," this "Home of Souls," known more than seven thousand years. When I entered it, Elena seemed to be attached to my body, which, of course, is not surprising since I had promised her that wherever I went I would take her with me. However, I failed to see Gusi and her boy, and Christa, nor any of Elena's relatives. The details of this conversation are already rapidly disappearing in the day memory, but the impression of this mighty eternity beyond will remain with me forever. Perhaps I should not speak about it, but as no warning was given me, I will write it down for you before it disappears as much as the poor vocabularity of this language permit. It may interest you in case anything should happen, and also for your own sake, too.

Now, as I write this down, I have a feeling that I have been moved and am still standing right on the threshold of this eternal space. It is as if only a thin veil separates me from it. I am convinced now that Mother and Father are living happily together in that eternal life, and I am so glad that it has moved so close to me or else I have moved close to it.

With love,
your brother Carl.

THE only thing on that morning's awakening which consoled me was Elena. On seeing her back again at my side, I said:

"All right, my darling, we will carry on the fight together until we go back. The time is short, then we shall be together in the home where there is no death."

Seeing her crucifix on the side of the bed and Saint Cecilia above, playing the organ, I sat down at the organ by the bed and played the hymn "The Home of the Soul." It sounded well enough, but oh, how poor compared to what I had heard in the immensity of sounds of the infinite. The nearest resemblance to it would be an immense radio where you would hear millions of voices together from all parts of the world in peaceful harmony. There must be a possibility to tune an organ to a kind of sound which have deep metaphysical action on the soul. Seemingly impossible, I still would try it if I had time to do it. For this reason, I had tuned Elena's organ particularly careful with a kind of a tone according to my own hearing, that it sounded in accord with mine and Elena's inner soul. Such an instrument practically needs constant care to keep it in a fit condition, and requires a lot of patience; it is useless to try tuning when not at perfect peace or in too much of a hurry. When playing this organ in the evening I could distinctly hear Elena's voice singing, accompanying the organ tone whenever I played one particular song, namely: *"Ach wie ist's möglich dann, dass ich Dich lassen kann,"* "How can I part from Thee, how can I leave Thee?"

It sounded so sweet and lovely when her voice joined the organ tone. In Australia I had not less than three different organs which I all kept in tune in my residence.

There was immutable friendship, love and harmony between Elena and myself. Frank, on the other hand, always seemed to have some trouble with the dogs in the kitchen, or himself, or with the townspeople. It was just his nature and he would feel ill at ease if he could not dig up a scrap, if only with the cat.

Placing Elena on the scales, I found

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that by degrees she was losing weight as time went on. It was desiccation. She was drying out and had been losing gradually from ninety to seventy pounds, then to sixty, then fifty and finally down to forty pounds as I weighed her from time to time. With this loss of weight her features would naturally change, becoming stiff and a little distorted when the underlying tissues fell in after dissipation of the fluids, leaving empty spaces as the water evaporated.

On the 2nd of March, 1940, while working on my large boat, stepping on deck frames from which I had removed the planks, I slipped and fell below in between the exposed floor beams, breaking my ribs on the left side near the heart. I thought my end had come as my lungs could not function, and I could not get any air. I was paralyzed with pain and unable to extricate myself.

My first thought was: My God, what shall become of Elena in the house if I do not return. My sweet Elena, I will join you soon.

Then I heard her voice say to me:

"Take a deep breath, as deep as you can, expand your chest, then you can come home."

My sweet angel had come to help and console me in my distress. As my lungs refused to expand any more and my heart was beating with difficulty, I relaxed for a few minutes to concentrate on thinking: Elena, you are right, it will work or else it will burst.

I tried to take a breath, but couldn't as my chest was collapsed and my heart was pounding with excruciating pain. Freeing myself a little with my arms, which were also injured, from the timbers, I lay still for another minute, then I started again with all the strength that I could summon to expand my chest. I managed to get a little air into my lungs and found that it helped me. I tried again to get more air, and with all available force succeeded in fully inflating my lungs so that my chest now became fully expanded. I felt that the broken ribs had aligned themselves normally again without cutting internally; this because the pain had now become less intense. It was just bearable and I was able to climb out of the boat and walk home, always keeping my chest filled with air to prevent it from collapsing again. When I got to the house, I had to lie down alongside of Elena to rest. I said:

"Elena, my angel, I am back by your side. I don't care what happens next since I am with you."

The pain was becoming almost unbearable as the blood began circulating. Finally I had to get up again. I did not have sufficiently wide adhesive tape for bandage and had to wait until a tourist brought some from town. Then I bandaged my chest myself, but still the pain kept agonizing me in every position, either sitting or lying down, flat on my back or on rolling to my left or right side; it made not a bit of difference. That night I heard Elena's voice again:

"Come closer to my side, then turn so that your back lies against my body."

I answered:

"Darling, I certainly will do anything to get rid of this pain."

SLOWLY I moved over until my back was resting snugly against the right side of her body. All pain left me immediately. Oh, how thankful I was to have found relief. I thanked God and my Elena. At last I could go to sleep in peace and breathe normally without any pain. I slept well, forgetting the injury until late the next day. Only, when I moved away from her, the pain returned. So, when evening came, I had to lean against her again to be free

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from pain. It was strange that as soon as my back touched her body, the pain promptly left. This continued every night until my chest was completely healed. During all this time, I could not lie in any other position.

As I was still too weak to work on the boats, I passed my time in making new cement urns and vases to beautify Elena's tomb, which would also be mine some day. I also remoulded the figure of the angel above the entrance of the tomb who is holding a sealed letter. The boys had shot the wings off the angel. While thus occupied with cement work, visitors also wanted similar work for their gardens, which I did for them.

On three successive days, namely September 11th, 12th and 13th, 1940, while lying half awake, I heard Elena's voice anxiously calling me:

"Hide me, hide me somewhere." And another time: "Can't you hide me somewhere?"

Astonished at what it might mean, because, of course, I took it literally, I answered:

"Why should I hide you, Elena? You could not be safer anywhere than here in your own bed."—It puzzled me also that she would not say anything more. Of course, I could have put her back into the casket, which would not have been better but worse; it would deprive her of the air which she needed.

The 14th of September, just before sunrise, I was awakened by Elena's body trembling all over for about a minute. I tried to soothe her trembling form with my hands and spoke to her softly:

"Elena, God bless you, darling, are you going to rise? Rise, if it must be to our Heavenly Father. All of my love will help you on the way. When I took her hands in mine and kissed her lips, the tremor had gone.

CHAPTER IX

The Breaking of the Peace

ON THE 28th of September, the tomb in the cemetery had been broken into and the coffins been tampered with. I learned of this from Nana's husband. Arriving at the tomb, I found Elena's sister Nana there with some other women, the sexton and undertaker Pritchard. Both of the latter assured me that everything was all right inside, as the inner coffin had not been opened and that they had closed the outside casket. And that henceforth the tomb would be watched. Whereupon Elena's sister Nana insisted that the vault be opened as she wanted to see inside the coffin. With this I flatly refused to comply.

On the 1st of October, 1940, I was again called to the cemetery by Nana's husband and there was Nana, urging me to open the coffins in the vault. This time there was more of a crowd. I had the only keys to my vault. Nana threatened that if I did not open the coffins for her, she would have them opened by order of the law. Suspecting her immediately of breaking into the vault in the first place, I absolutely refused to open the tomb any more, as there were no reasons to disturb the coffins. Nana then said, spitefully, that if she had her way, she would take Elena out of the tomb and bury her in a hole in the earth to rot like herself, and whatever Elena had said to me were lies. She did not want Elena to lie in this elaborate tomb, that she was no better than herself, why should she lie in state.

"Let her rot in the earth like myself."

I answered:

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, talking like that at the grave of Elena. She is an angel, but not you. I

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can clearly see that you don't love her, nor are you interested in her safety. All you seem to be interested in is to strip your sister again of her jewels, that's why you broke into the tomb."

The sexton had handed me a piece of rusty iron, bent from the strain of wrenching the locks from the cement walls, and a pair of old rusty scissors, used apparently to dig the window panes out of the door. These I turned over to the sheriff for fingerprints. (No fingerprints were taken, however).

After a while Nana spoke again, but this time plaintively:

"Please, open the tomb and let me see Elena inside the coffin or I believe I will go crazy. If only I could see her to know that she is all right, I'll be satisfied."

Well, this sounded sensible, and fearing that she really might become hysterical and since she was the only sister remaining, I decided to convince her and let her see that Elena was perfectly safe. So I said to her:

"All right, Nana, I don't want you to go crazy, I will let you see Elena. Let us talk this over in peace and arrange it between ourselves. This is not a public affair."

"Where do you want us to go?" she asked.

"Well, to your house, which is nearest from here," I answered.

"No," she replied. "Not in my place."

"Well then, let's drive down to my house."

She agreed and so we drove straight for my house on Flagler Avenue.

At my home she invited another woman, who was in the car, to come in which, however, I vetoed as she did not belong to the family.

When coming inside my rooms, Nana stayed back near the door, while her young husband Mario came along with me to where Elena's bed stood. He exclaimed:

"Here is Elena's bed, Nana."

I then invited Nana:

"Come here, Nana, and see how beautiful Elena is resting in her bed in her silken garments with all her jewelry. Come and see, she could not have it better anywhere. I think that will pacify you now."

She came alongside and looked at Elena, after I had lifted the curtains. After looking her over, she turned around:

"This isn't my sister. That's another girl you have here."

Her husband, looking at her more closely now and feeling her hand and hair, said:

"Yes, Nana, it is she."

Nana turning to me, said: "How long have you got her here?"

"It is now seven years," I said.

Nana gripped her husband's arm and said:

"Let's get out of here, I feel bad. Let's go back to the cemetery and open the vault to see what is inside the coffins."

Her husband Mario answered excitedly:

"What's the use now, you have seen that she is here." But she persisted in pretending that it was not Elena and Mario shrugged:

"I don't know what to do with Nana, she crazy."

"I think so too, but you ought to teach her some common sense," I said. "I am not going to open the vault and coffins. Not after showing Elena to her."

They both went to the car, but before going away, Nana called me:

"I want you to put Elena back into the vault, but I want to be present to see that she lies in the coffin, do you hear?"

"Elena and I will go back into the

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vault together when our time is up, but not right now. I don't see why you should worry about her now. You never looked after her for the past nine years. She has been under my care all these years. I have paid all of her expenses, not you; you forget that I own that tomb with everything that is inside, not you!"

AFTER this they drove back to town. It was the last conversation between her sister and me, and it is the absolute truth, no matter what Nana said later on at the trial.

I went back to Elena and said some soothing words to her, lest she be hurt that her sister would not acknowledge her.

"She cannot injure us, no matter what comes, don't worry, darling. And as Nana is only after your jewels, let me take care of them for you until the trouble is past, then you will get them all back, sweetheart."

She released them easily and I locked them safely away in a little casket.

On Sunday, the 5th of October, 1940, there drove up the fateful motorcade, headed by two sheriffs, then the justice of the peace, followed by the funeral car and several other cars, all halting at my place. The two sheriffs, stepping forward, knocked at my entrance door. When I opened the screen, the head sheriff presented a warrant on which I was charged with being in possession of a dead body. Politely he asked whether I was the person whose name was on this paper. I answered yes, this was my name. He then asked me to show him the body. After seeing the body in the bed, he inquired if it was true that I had this body in my possession for seven years. I answered in the affirmative.

"And who is she?"

"She is my bride, Elena Hoyos."

He asked further whether I had a certificate for the body.

"Yes, I have."

"Show it to me, please."

After getting out her certificate from Elena's records, I showed it to him. He shook his head:

"This is her certificate of death, that isn't the certificate we want."

"I do not know of any other certificate required for the dead."

"I am sorry, we have to take you to the courthouse, as you have no certificate. You may explain in court."

So I followed the sheriff into their car. I noticed the funeral car driving up and two attendants stepping in my door. They carried Elena out in a wicker basket, putting her in the funeral car. This audacity enraged me. I made a move to stop them. The sheriffs held me on each side, pacifying me, telling me everything was all right, but I said:

"There is no security for my house, when strangers are going in and out at liberty. I protest against this violation of my rights."

The sheriff answered:

"We are having the body placed in the funeral home where it is safer until your case is settled. Then you may get it back. I will see that nothing is removed and lock the doors and bring you the keys."

After bringing me the keys, the car started toward town, where I was taken to the courthouse.

Now there began cross examination by the sheriff. All about my past experience with Elena, her death, burial and disinterment, reinterment in the tomb, etc., etc. Finally he dug out the great old U.S. Law Statute book, showing me the paragraph under which I had been indicted, according to the warrant, reading it to me:

"Accused of wantonly and maliciously demolishing, disfiguring and destroy-

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ing a grave."

The sheriff was a kind-hearted man; I saw how his eyes filled with tears as he said:

"I see there is a wrong being done to you, you are not guilty in the sense of the charges in the book. You did build the tomb and made it beautiful at your own expense. I am sorry, but we have to keep you here until the case is cleared in court."

By this time the place was crowded with photographers, taking shots from right and left. It annoyed me and I asked the sheriff, why all this publicity. He answered smiling:

"They are photographers of the press."

"Why do you permit this nuisance?"

"Well, it is a custom, our liberal government gives freedom to the press."

Then came the order by Justice of Peace, Esquinaldo, that I be held on $1000 bail until the court's disposal of the case.

I was taken into the county jail for retention. But first I handed the sheriff Elena's jewel case to lock up in the office safe. I had picked it up at home before leaving and I didn't like taking it with me to the jail. I also asked the sheriff to take care of my dogs, which he promised.

THIS night in jail was hard for me. When I laid down on the cot, staring at that barred window, I finally prayed:

"If this is to be my final end, then, God, unite me with my Elena forever, as a spiteful world makes our peaceful existence impossible."

A band began playing somewhere in the neighborhood. It was a cradle song, over and over again, to lull me to sleep. Suddenly Elena's spirit was standing before me in her bridal dress, bending down, embracing and kissing me:

"Suffer it for me, it won't be long, then you will be free." Then it was dark again. As she had become invisible, I turned over with my face against the wall. As I did not want to see the bars. I slept peacefully until morning.

As soon as I woke up, a friend came. Looking through the iron-barred window, he comforted me, offering help. Shortly after breakfast more friends arrived, offering help, asking me if they could bring some fruits and milk, and informing me that Frank would stay on my premises on guard day and night until my return. They promised to bring food for him as well as for the 13 dogs. Now this was quite a substantial help to me. I had not known I had such good friends. In the afternoon a lady was brought in by the jailkeeper, who handed me fruit and sweets and also promised to see that my place and the dogs were taken care of. And in the evening I was surprised by the good Samaritan, Senorita Marguerita, a young Spanish friend, who knew Elena well. She consoled me kindly, bringing cookies, fruit, sweets and hot tea for my supper. With my Elena taken from me, I had felt utterly lost; now I learned there were good people left in this world.

This night the mysterious band again played the same cradle song somewhere nearby and I had a good, restful sleep and a feeling that I was not forsaken. In the morning again I noticed a friendly face, looking in my barred window. After breakfast the chief sheriff came to introduce Attorney L. Harris to me. He offered to defend me in court if I would give him the authority, which I gladly did.

At noon, the keeper informed me that a whole crowd of young ladies had come all the way from Tampa, who fought demanding to see me. But he said he could not let them come inside as there

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were too many and they would storm the whole place. So I should better go out in the yard to meet them.

"But don't forget," he said, "they are all my girls."

I went outside to the young ladies, all pretty girls, who shouted:

"We have all come from Tampa to see you. We are cigar makers from the Tampa factory, and we have read all about you in the papers. We wish you luck and that you will win out and get your Elena back."

"We are all for you," said one pretty speaker in a beautiful black silk dress.

They were such a delightfully happy lot, and they all shook hands with me while I expressed my delight in their coming and thanked them for their kind wishes. Meanwhile these good girls were making a collection among themselves, offering it to me, which I refused to accept but was obliged to take, as they insisted. The kind offer proceeded from generous hearts and it would have offended them if I had not accepted, so there was no use arguing.

They finally took leave with kind and sincere wishes. How nice and sweet it was of these young girls, who were motivated by true benevolence. God will be with them all and bless them.

In the afternoon came Father Moreaux, the priest who baptized Elena. He offered his help, but I did not see any need for help for myself.

"I am all right. The one who needs help and protection and who cannot defend herself is Elena, since she has been taken away from me."

He said he thought she was safe enough while in the custody of the undertaker where she was now, but I had my doubts. And later it proved that I was right. Therefore, I wrote a letter and sent it out by the warden to the Sister Superior of the convent, who knew Elena well before death, imploring the Sisters to protect Elena while she was away from my care.

A lady came from Miami to interview me, bringing chocolates and fruit for my supper, telling me she would stay for the court hearing, before going back. In the evening Marguerita came again, untiring angel, bringing nice hot tea and biscuits, my favorite food, and also presenting me with a rosary. Senorita Marguerita knows me well from the hospital.

Again the band played the same tune that night.

ON THE 8th of October, Attorney Harris led me into the courthouse to a seat near the platform. It was to be a preliminary hearing before the Justice of Peace, Esquinaldo.

The hall was packed with people. After the formal reading of charges against me by the State Attorney, he called Mrs. Medina, Elena's sister, as chief witness. She told how I alone had the key to the mausoleum and always kept it locked up, and that I always refused to open it when she wanted to go in. (The fact is, that frequently I opened the tomb, so that the relatives could go inside, but never once did they do so.)

She added that people had been talking in town and she wanted to see if Elena was safe. But that, instead, I had suggested to talk things over. So she and her husband went with me to my house on Flagler Avenue. There she said she caught a glimpse of the old wooden bed her father gave her when she was sick. (It was I who bought this bed for Elena.) Raising the curtains, she said, she saw the feet of the body.

"That's Elena," she quoted me as saying. "I beg you to leave her to me, see how pretty she looks, touch her little hands." She claimed to have

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answered: "You have caused us lots of trouble, people are talking about us. They say, you have a ring and talk to her by wireless." And I had answered "You don't have to listen to people." Also she declared, she had given me an ultimatum, namely, that I must place Elena back in the tomb within a week or else she would proceed against me. And at the end of the week she got the warrant, which brought my arrest the following Sunday. Miss Medina, a friend of hers, corroborated her story, as did her husband Mario Medina.

Then Mrs. Sawyer, custodian of the Catholic part of the cemetery, testified to finding the glass door on the vault broken and she had informed Mrs. Medina, which in turn prompted her to question me.

Asked by the judge if she knew who broke into the vault, she answered: "I don't know."

Otto Bethel, sexton of the cemetery, verified the date of the burglary in the cemetery. Reginal Pritchard of the funeral home, employed by me to conduct Elena's funeral and later disinterment for transfer into the mausoleum, was the only defense witness. Pritchard testified that Elena's father had signed the authorization before he died, for a disinterment to be conducted under von Cosel's supervision at his expense.

Asked by the judge how much he thought I had expended on behalf of Elena, he said:

"Close to $3000."

Asked how the remains looked to him now, he answered:

"If I went to see a wax figure at Kress or any other store, I would see the same thing."

Elena's body, laid out in a funeral parlor, dressed in her blue silk robe, with a rose in her hair, and covered by a gauze veil, was the biggest sightseeing attraction that Key West had ever known. No less than 6,850 people viewed the body. Her little patent leather shoes reposed beside her stockinged feet.

Now I had to take the chair. I gave my name, Carl Tanzler von Cosel, age 64, occupation, chemist, engineer, physicist, scientist, roentgenologist with degrees in philosophy, psychology, medicine, etc. Questioned: how I got acquainted with Elena, when and where I met her, and what Elena was to me. I answered that she was my patient and later became my bride and that I always regarded her as my wife since she accepted my ring.

"I had been in love with her the first time I saw her. I knew then she was the lady I had been looking for all my life."

I told how I had envisioned her from my early youth, painting pictures of her before I had seen her. How she appeared to me in a vision in the old Cosel manor, also in Italy in Campo Santo. How amongst the monuments and tombs, I saw her form and features carved in marble, standing on the grave of a young woman. How, while still gazing, her living spirit appeared just behind the monument and then it disappeared again.

"It was in Australia many years later when her spirit appeared in my residence in Sydney, right beside the pipe organ, her dark hair hanging over her shoulders down to her knees. The spirit stayed in my house seven days, walking with me every step."

THEN Attorney Harris interrupted: "And then you came to Key West and found that lady, the spirit of your dreams, and lost her again, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "But she is still with me now right here in this hall. I

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told her, no matter what happened to her I would take care of her in life and death. This holy promise took complete control of my mind and body. She was my bride when she accepted my proposal of marriage and I regard her as my wife. Her death has sealed our bond.

"I built her monument with my own hands and watched over her all these years so that nothing should harm her, and I think that I have done my best."

"What did you find when you disinterred her? What did she look like?"

"There were plenty of maggots. Her body was teeming with them. Everything was a mess."

"How long ago was it that you took the bones out of the crypt to your house?"

"It was months after they were placed in the tomb, pretty close to eight years ago."

"How did you remove Elena's bones from the crypt to your house?"

"I removed the casket from the crypt into a car outside of the cemetery and drove alongside the airplane, placing it in the cabin."

"Did you meet anybody during this work, did anybody help you and if so, who was the person, as the casket must have been heavy?"

"No, sir, I did not meet a living person during my work, except the driver of the car outside, who helped me to lift the casket up into the plane, that was all, and I don't know his name."

"Didn't the taxi driver ask you what it contained?"

"No. He asked no questions, I paid for the service."

"Did you not move the airplane to the beach afterward?"

"Yes, I did. Mario Medina did the moving!"

"Medina, is that true, did you do the moving?"

"Yes, sir, I moved the airplane to the beach, but I didn't know that Elena was inside."

Harris questioned me:

"Did you have the idea that her spirit would unite with her body and commune with you?"

"Yes, so it did. Many times her spirit gave me advice, even about the organ, also technical advice. Whenever I do not know what to do, she tells me. She also told that this trouble was coming and asked me several times to hide her body, but I asked, why should I hide her, but she said no more and a week later the trouble came."

"How would it affect you if that body were taken from you?"

"I would feel lost. I had promised her I would keep and protect her against destruction for the rest of my life, even at the sacrifice of my own life. It may endanger my own life."

"How long do you think her body will last in the condition it is now?"

"Indefinitely."

"Do you think there is still life in the body which could be resurrected?"

"There is always life left in the body which can be resurrected by special methods, such as incubation, but as I had been interrupted repeatedly I could not complete my work, though partly successful. I can do better yet, if I am left undisturbed in my research."

ON THE 9th of October, after the hearing, I was informed of the Court's decision: that I be held further under $1,000 bail until the next session of the criminal court, one month later, on the charge of wantonly and maliciously destroying a grave and removing the body without authorization. This was read to me by Judge Lord from the law books. Also I was informed that I would see Elena no more, as she was no relative of mine. I was just a friend

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and that was all, and she was not going to be put back into the vault, but would be buried in the ground by the sister, Mrs. Medina.

I was thunderstruck. This was not fair, this was monstrous. She to be buried again after all my work? Elena nothing to me? She, who was everything to me. All I could stammer was:

"It is the end of everything for me. I protest against this inhuman decision. You cannot do this. It means her utter ruin and a break of faith to my Elena. If I cannot have her back, I will abide by your decision, but I will carry on my fight to the highest court of the land to annul this decision."

Later, Attorney Harris came into my cell with some moving picture agent, who wanted to produce a film of the affair. Harris advising me to accept on a percentage basis, because it would bring in money and he would place the bond to free me. But after I had given my consent to the undertaking, the man told Harris, that, as far as he was concerned, I might as well stay in prison, until he wanted me.

The 10th of October, Thursday, I was called to the courthouse to be examined by three doctors, for sanity, by order of the court. They declared me perfectly sane, there could be no other finding, despite a few cranks who would like to see me declared insane.

The doctors later examined Elena's body at the undertaker for signs of violation which was the judge's order. This examination, too, proved negative as they reported, the body being mummified.

Visitors continued to call on me in the jail. They brought fruit and chocolate, and the sweet Senorita Marguerita brought hot tea and biscuits for my supper in the evening again.

And the invisible band still played that cradle song each night until I fell asleep.

AT LAST, on Saturday, October 12th, I was called by the sheriff to the office. Friends had placed the bond for me, (but not the moving picture agent). They were Benny Fernandez and Joseph Zorsky, who had made the following statement:

"Persons in Key West who recall the circumstances surrounding Dr. von Cosel's kindly administrations while Elena Hoyos was in the hospital, have implicit faith in his motives. In appreciation of the services he rendered then, for the devotion to the girl he loved, and because of the humanitarian aspects of this present case, I have followed my best judgment in assisting in furnishing bond for the defendant. We, who know him, think he should be freed of all charges."

Attorney Harris received many heartening letters from citizens all over the country, such as:

Will you please bring this letter to the attention of the proper authorities. Relative to Carl Tanzler von Cosel, we feel that the very fact that he preserved and kept a human body for a period of seven years, is proof of his abilities as a scientist; furthermore, his investigation into the supernatural should be considered as humane and valuable and not as a criminal case. We resent any calumny as to his mental status and we protest against the arrest and imprisonment of a man of noble character and intent. In these times, when the world's lust goes out to kill and to destroy, it is no more than to be expected that an innocent man suffers persecution. But, if by a miracle a person like Prof. von Cosel, would succeed in restoring to life a deceased person, the greatest discovery of all ages would have been made.

Even if his chances be a million to one against success, it is worthwhile to

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try. Let not the 20th century prosecute a scientist in his research. Past history reveals that most of our great scientists have been unjustly treated by the majority, who could neither follow nor comprehend men, who had the courage and intelligence to further the progress of the world.

Summing up, we feel that Professor Carl von Cosel, since the laws of these States made it impossible for him to receive permission to carry on his line of research, has had no recourse except to do exactly what he has done.

We feel that not only should he be liberated with compensation, but also, that he should be permitted to carry on with his studies with the permission of the subject's custodians.

Signed: L. and L. and S.
of New York and Florida.

I was free now. All I wanted was to go home. But my friends, Zorsky and Benny, would not let me go. Their car was waiting outside to take me to their hotel, the Cactus Terrace, where I was invited to stay as their guest and recuperate a while, for I needed rest. They all tried to cheer me up and they protected me from curiosity. Many tried to see me by all kinds of maneuvers, but in vain. I had had enough cross examination and was tired of it. I sorely needed rest though I never refused friendly conversation with honest people or with scientists.

But all the time I was pining to be back in the room again, where Elena's bed stood, despite the excellent comforts here in the hotel and the kind hospitality. There was a mysterious force, it was Elena herself, which urged me to come back to where she had been with me. So, on October 19th, I went home to take charge of my premises and give Frank, who had been guarding the place day and night, a well deserved rest. There I found, in the meantime, that almost half of my dogs had died, amongst them "Granny," my good, old faithful Granny.

OUT of the blue, the movie man reappeared. He wanted to rig up some kind of an outdoor stage, in the woods, close to the building, for the purpose of producing a moving picture of his own, with me in it as an actor (which I am not). However, it proved a failure from the start. I did not approve of the whole silly performance. Besides the contract had never been fulfilled; in my hour of need this man had failed to put up the thousand dollar bond for me as he had promised to do.

By hundreds and thousands people came to see me at my hermitage in Flagler Avenue. The license plates of their cars represented every state in the Union and there were visitors from the Bahamas, from Cuba and from Canada. They were nice, kindhearted people all of them and full of sympathy. It made me feel glad after this unpleasant experience. Folks came to shake hands with me and to see the airplane and the organ, to take pictures and even movies in technicolor. I took this as an homage for my darling Elena and it made me proud. Some asked for flowers, others took along some small discarded organ-parts. Ladies begged for tiny bits of Elena's bridal dress for a souvenir; even nails and screws of my laboratory were in demand. I hadn't thought I would like visitors, but as it turned out they did me a lot of good.

Soon I was able to provide appropriate little gifts; pictures of Elena and some of the plaster of Paris death-masks I had made from her.

For months on end this public interest set new records for traffic on the highways and on the toll-bridges leading to Key West. People began to tell me that I had "put Key West on the

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map." But although it was a pleasure and a comfort to me to find that I had so many friends, there was considerable physical strain involved in this. For they came as early as dawn and they kept on coming till late at night. I hardly had any time to get a meal and they all wanted for me to tell the story; an impossible feat for me since the complete story takes hours to tell. But then; I always did the best I could and it was because so many friendly people urged me to write a book so they could read and keep the story, that I promised them that I would do so when I would have time, but at present I was much too busy.

My knees had to serve me as a desk to write the book of Elena.

Her body is gone, but then the casket is still by my side and in it I have placed her plaster form of her body clothed in the last of her three bridal-gowns. The lid is lined with her pictures when alive and at all times there are fresh flowers by her head and the silver crucifix stands guard and Elena's rosary is draped over the shoulders of our Saviour.

Human malice had dynamited my laboratory, on the beach long before; human meanness has plundered and torn down the very roof over my head. Human jealousy and hatreds have robbed me of the body of my Elena; they have even poisoned my faithful dogs.

Yet Divine happiness is flowing through me. *For she is with me.* Nobody could take her away from me for God Almighty has united our souls. She has survived death, forever and ever she is with me.

And every look at her picture and every thought in my mind is a silent prayer of thanks. Thanks to the Creator who let me to find her. Thanks that He gave me the strength and the knowledge to prolong her brief life on earth for nearly two years, to make it tolerable in its pains and to salvage her beauty from the ravages of the grave.

She is my everlasting joy, she is to me that supreme and divine joy which the great Beethoven tried to express—and couldn't enjoy and feel in the last before his death, his Ninth Symphony. God bless her. *Ex tenebris lucem.*

THE END

TABOO OF KNOTS

By FRAN FERRIS

TABOOS are usually put on things that are evil or unclean, and that might bring ill luck to a group. There might be taboos on knots, crosses, arms or legs, or rings and locks, or most anything that could be an impediment or restriction. The taboo of the knot is quite well known. It was in effect in Europe down to the eighteenth century. The Moslem pilgrims to Mecca would never wear knots or rings. Some people would not wear a ring unless the circle were broken for the complete circle resembles the magic of construction which makes it taboo.

Knots are considered especially taboo at the time of childbirth, marriage and death. Among the Saxons of Transylvania, when a woman is in labor, all knots on her garments were untied and all the locks throughout the house were unlocked. This release of constriction was supposed to make her delivery easier.

Until the eighteenth century in Europe, it was believed that the consummation of a marriage could be prevented by anyone if, during the ceremony, they would tie a knot or lock a lock and throw it away into the water. No real union between the married couple was thought possible until the object was unlocked or untied. So it became a grave offense, punishable by death, for anyone to cast such a spell. In 1718 the parliament of Bordeaux sentenced a person to be burned alive for bringing ruin to a family by the knotting of cords. In 1705 two people in Scotland were condemned to death for stealing charmed knots which a woman had made in order to destroy the happiness of Spalding of Ashintilly.

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COME ALONG WITH ME

By S. M. TENNESHAW

Two little men and a strange girl were very insistent with Carter T. Jones. They kept trying to take him somewhere . . .

"WHO'S in here?"

Carter T. Jones stood still and silent inside the door to his penthouse apartment, listening. The dim echo of his own words floated dully around the flat—hit the bedroom off to the left, the dining room, library, and guest rooms straight ahead, the kitchen and butler's pantry off to the right, and then floated back to him and was gone.

It was dark. And it was suddenly silent. It should have been silent all along. He hadn't made any noise putting the key into the lock. The door had slid soundlessly open under his hand. He had walked just as soundlessly onto the foyer rug bridging the living room. But there had been a sound. The sound of drawers being slid open and shut.

"Who's in here?" Jones called out again. After the echo slid away, there was only the beating of his heart. That seemed to grow in magnitude as he stood there. That and the strange crawling feeling of eeriness that crept up the back of his spine.

He suddenly heard it again—a soft scrape, a sort of kick, much as a shoe might make scuffling against the leg of a table or chair.

Jones stiffened. The curling eeriness along his spine became a tingling throb. He was sure of it now. *There was someone in the apartment!*

He wanted to shout. He wanted to scream. But somehow he couldn't. Somewhere in the darkness ahead there was a man, a man with a gun, a burglar probably as frightened as he, but backed up with bullets.

He heard the scraping sound again. This time closer. It seemed to be coming from the master bedroom on the left—or closer.

It was. Much closer. Jones heard a shoe touch bare floor between rugs. It was just a small sound but it had all the impact of a rifle shot there in the darkness.

The tingling throb of eeriness left Jones' back. The uncertainty was gone. He was sure now that a burglar stood or walked somewhere ahead of him. A surge of anger swelled through him.

"Stand still whoever you are! I've got a gun! I'll start shooting at the next sound!" Jones shouted out into the flat. His words rang from room to room and the darkness swallowed them up. They were just words, Jones knew. He didn't have a gun. He doubted if he would have been able to shoot it even if he did have one. But the burglar didn't know that—he hoped.

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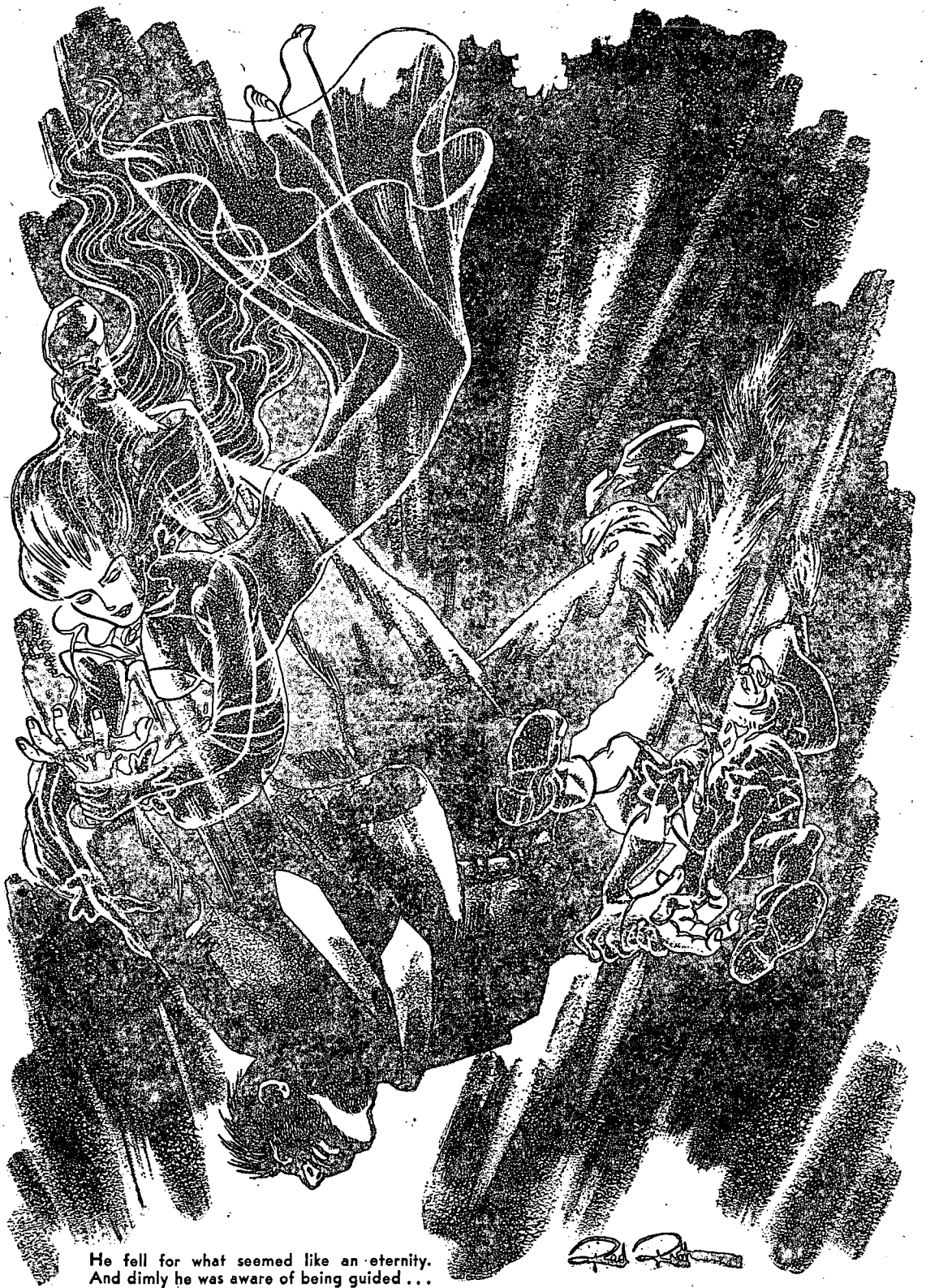

He fell for what seemed like an eternity. And dimly he was aware of being guided . . .

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HE COULD hear himself breathing. It seemed strangely loud. And then he realized that it wasn't himself he heard. There was someone else in the room. Someone with a gulping catch in his breath, a spasm of desperation.

Unconsciously Jones took a step backward. His foot clunked against the base of the door frame.

Almost at once there was a frightened gasp from somewhere ahead of Jones. In the same instant there was a clatter of furniture being hit or brushed aside and the sudden pounding of running feet.

"Stop! Stop or I'll fire!"

The someone didn't stop. If anything, as far as Jones could tell, the scamper of feet became more intense, the crash and bang of overturned furniture a rising crescendo.

Jones decided two things in a hurry. One: Whoever was in the flat was more frightened than he, and two: If he was more frightened it was logical to assume he didn't have a gun.

Jones dove after the scurrying feet.

He heard a door swish ahead of him. That would be the swinging door leading into the kitchen. Jones nearly laughed. He was thinking, even as his shoulder hit the door, that there was no way out of the flat from that end except the dumbwaiter—

The swinging door shot open with a whoosh of air and Jones catapulted into the darkness of the kitchen to the accompaniment of a loud piercing shriek.

He stopped short inside the door and another shriek lashed out at him from the darkness. Only this time it seemed to be hollow, distant, fading with terrific speed.

There was another cry. This time, almost inaudible. Almost immediately a dull echoing thud followed. And then there was silence.

For a long moment Jones stood still and tense inside the kitchen door. His muscles seemed to have frozen, and the tingling raced back up the base of his spine. There was no more scurrying, no more sound, just nothing.

After a long time he reached for the light switch.

A bright dazzle of light cascaded around him and for a moment he could see nothing else. Finally his squinting eyes took away the hurting glare and he looked.

What he saw was nothing new to him. There was the stove, all white and shiny and spotless. There was the built-in sink with the pale blue cabinets all around it. There was the refrigerator, tall and white and sturdy. And everything else.

Everything but what he was looking for. A man. A man who had ran into the kitchen with scurrying feet, feet that bumped and knocked against furniture. Where were they? There was no way out—just the door behind him . . . no, wait!

There was an oblong black opening in the far wall. A dark scab festering against the white kemtoned walls.

"The dumbwaiter!" Jones choked the words out. He suddenly remembered that series of drawn out shrieks that had faded with distance. Now he knew why.

"He fell down it! The crazy fool!"

His words sounded nervous and funny standing there all alone. Then, before he knew it, his feet had carried him over to the black shaft and he was sticking his head through into the hole that went down in darkness to the service room fifteen floors below.

He heard sounds down there. Faint but definite sounds. He could hear hysterical shouts of men and women, even something that sounded like sobbing fright.

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He jerked his head back in and stood trembling in the kitchen. It slowly dawned on him that he had been responsible for a man being killed. True, the man had been a thief, a burglar, one deserving death, but Jones had never killed as much as a fly before. A shudder swept over him.

"I've got to do something . . . maybe he's still alive!"

Even the thought helped. Jones ran through the kitchen, left the swinging door flapping loosely behind him, past the overturned end tables in the living room, and out the front door.

THE ROOM was full of a variety of odors. Most of them were food and the subtle savories emanating from slow burning ovens. These were all pleasant smells. They were what Jones expected to find in the big service room of the hotel. But there was another smell.

He caught it even before he saw the little knot of people crowding around the series of dumb waiter shafts set in the far wall. It was the smell of blood and something far more sinister in impact—death.

Jones tried to ignore this smell as he threaded his way through a maze of tables and approached the little knot of people. He could hear a babble of words and sighs as he came closer. The words didn't mean much. A lot of shock and horror that Jones expected even before he saw what was causing it. The sighs, from a huddling group of maids and service women, meant even less.

"Mr. Jones! Oh, Mr. Jones!"

A small dapperish man in pinstripe tweeds, with a long thin face and frantic watering eyes, broke away from the circle of people as Jones approached. Jones met him.

"I got down here as fast as I could, Bobble . . . is he dead?"

Curtis Bobble, manager of the Sheridan Arms Hotel, started rubbing his fingers together in a gesture of woe. "It's terrible, sir, simply terrible! But you have no idea how glad I am to see you—for awhile we thought it might have been—"

Jones nodded glumly and tried to side-step Bobble. He couldn't.

"I wouldn't do that, sir . . . it's a mess, simply a mess!"

Bobble had his arms outstretched and Jones couldn't help observing that with all his elegant attire, Bobble had the sudden appearance of a scarecrow —very scared.

"Get out of my way, Bobble." Jones said with firmness.

Bobble started dancing backward, his arms still spread outwards. "Please, Mr. Jones! I know he fell from your apartment—but you wouldn't know him anymore—he—he's a mess!"

Jones became conscious of other people looking at him now. A sharp anger rose within him. "For your information, Bobble, I *don't* know him! Now get out of my way!"

A blank look of astonishment crossed Bobble's thin face. Sheer surprise caused him to stop dancing backward, and his arms fell limply. Jones used this moment to side-step Bobble.

Behind Jones, Bobble came to life again. "But that's impossible! You *must* know him—Mr. Jones!"

But Jones went on unheeding. He had reached the little group of people around the dumbwaiter shaft. Most of them were service personnel and they moved aside for him.

Jones went through their ranks and his lips tightened grimly as he reached the shaft.

A POLICE officer was just straightening from the pulpy mass of

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blood, bone and clothing that oozed out from the base of the dumb waiter. He was holding a frayed leather wallet in his hand. He looked up at Jones.

"Oh, it's you, sir! And damned glad I am to see you! For a minute I thought—"

"Yes, yes, Ryan," Jones finished irritably. "I know. You thought it was me. But it isn't."

Ryan shook his head sadly. "Which one of your guests was it, sir, and how did it happen?"

Jones sighed. "It wasn't one of my guests, Ryan. I have had no guests at any time this evening. In fact, I just returned home, and—"

Ryan's face went slack. "*You* don't know him—and he fell from your apartment? This is no time for jokes, sir!"

"I tell you I don't know his name!" Jones shot back as Bobble sidled up alongside Ryan, wringing his hands woefully.

"That's exactly what he told me, Officer. This is terrible—simply terrible! The papers . . ."

Jones addressed the police officer. "If you'll just give me a moment to explain, Ryan!"

But Ryan apparently was in no mood for explanations just then. He flourished the wallet he was holding. "Well I'll find out soon enough! This wallet was thrown out of his pocket when he hit!"

The mere mention of the accident brought a chill to Jones' spine. Unconsciously his eyes turned to the mass of crushed bone and tissue that had shortly before been alive. He heard Ryan muttering under his breath as he started examining the wallet. And then suddenly he wasn't aware of even that.

A strange feeling was possessing him. His eyes were riveted to the battered remains of the burglar, held there, suddenly, by an almost magnetic fascination. As he looked, it seemed as if an aura were spreading up and outwards—straight toward him.

At the same instant, a feeling of fullness overwhelmed Jones. It was unlike any sensation he had ever known. Almost as if he were suddenly too small for his own body.

Jones shook his head savagely just as Ryan let out a satisfied grunt.

"Hah! Here's his name! It's—"

"Badger Smith." Jones felt the words slip from his lips.

Ryan's mouth popped open. He glanced up at Jones in surprise. "I thought you said you didn't know who he was! It *is* Badger Smith—the most notorious burglar and pick-pocket in Chicago!"

Jones himself became aware that his own mouth had popped open. But it wasn't because of Ryan's announcement. It was the fact that the dead man's name had slipped from his own lips. *A man he had never known!*

Jones became aware that everyone's attention was fixed on him now. He felt a red flush cover his face as he saw the unmistakable signs of suspicion in the other people's eyes.

"Why did you lie, Mr. Jones?" Ryan asked suddenly.

"I, I didn't lie!" Jones replied nervously. "When I came home a short while ago I heard a prowler in my apartment. I chased him through the flat into the kitchen . . . but I was too late. He must have thought the dumb waiter was up. The next thing I knew I heard a scream fading away, and I knew he must have fallen down the shaft . . . I tell you I don't know anything else—he was burglarizing my flat!"

Ryan nodded. "And yet you knew his name. How?"

JONES had been waiting for that question. It had been inevitable.

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Yes, *how?* He didn't know, it was impossible that he should have known, and yet he had! But would they believe him? . . .

"I, it slipped my mind, I guess . . ." Jones answered hesitantly. "Everything happened so fast—I remember now, I asked him who he was, and he thought I had him cornered and he mentioned his name. . . That's when he made a break for it. . ."

Jones was surprised at how the lie slipped out so easily. He could feel sweat beading his forehead as once again the feeling of fullness overcame him. He felt as if he wanted to run and tear his clothes off. As if that might have helped. But he didn't know why it should.

"I see." Ryan's voice floated across to Jones. "I guess I can't blame you for being upset, Mr. Jones. As for this Smith, he had it coming to him. The department's been after him for a long time. You've done the public a great service."

Jones breathed a long sigh of relief. All he wanted now was to get out of the basement and back to his flat where he could take a long drink and forget that it had ever happened.

"If you don't mind, Ryan, I think I'll leave—this has been quite a shock to me." Jones said.

The police sergeant nodded. "Of course, sir. I understand. There'll be an inquest, naturally, but that will be a mere formality."

"Inquest!" Curtis Bobble suddenly jumped. He had been standing meekly by, his fingers clasped in nervous misery. Now it seemed as if his eyes were going to pop from his head. "Oh, but that's terrible! An inquest—think of the scandal! The hotel's name—"

Ryan shrugged. "That can't be helped. It will be only a formality." Jones listened in shocked silence. That was one thing he hadn't visualized. Now that Ryan had mentioned it, he could see his name being plastered across the front pages of every paper in the city. The thought chilled him.

"Isn't there some way we can hush this up?" Jones asked. "I've always led a more or less secluded life, and as Bobble says . . ."

The hotel manager was quick to pick it up. "Yes, yes, sergeant. Think of Mr. Jones! He belongs to one of the city's oldest and most respectable families! Think of the scandal that would surround his name!"

It was apparent, even to Ryan, that Bobble's interest was not so much centered around the Jones family name, as it was where the hotel's was concerned. But Ryan was well aware of the logic behind Bobble's words. The Jones name, and more importantly, the Jones fortune, commanded respect.

Jones, closely watching the police sergeant, could almost read what was going on in his mind.

"After all, sergeant, you yourself said it would be merely a formality," he said.

RYAN closed the wallet he was holding and slipped it into a coat pocket. "I think I can talk to the Inspector about it when he gets here. I wouldn't worry, sir . . . by the way, Bobble, you did call headquarters, didn't you?"

The hotel manager fidgeted guiltily. "I, I forgot—the excitement and all—I'll do it right now!"

Ryan waved him aside gruffly. "Never mind, I'll do it myself!" He turned to the service people. "Don't touch a thing while I'm gone!"

From the looks on their faces, Jones doubted if they would even approach within fifty feet of the dumb waiter shaft. Jones, himself, never wanted to

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see the damn thing again. He fell into a hurried step behind Ryan as the officer walked toward the service entrance leading to the hotel lobby.

As they walked, Jones felt himself moving faster, until he was directly behind Ryan. It was an unconscious movement, and when he tried to slow down to keep from tripping on Ryan's heels, he couldn't.

But he didn't trip. His feet matched the stride of the police sergeant perfectly. It was almost as if he had been practicing the movement for years.

And then a strange thought formed in Jones' mind. He tried to force it out, but couldn't. The thought became an obsession, and then an involuntary action.

Without warning, as Ryan opened the door into the lobby, Jones suddenly bumped up against him. Ryan grabbed on to the door for support.

"Hey—what the hell!"

Jones stepped quickly back, shoving his right hand into his coat pocket. "I'm sorry, sergeant, I lost my balance for a moment."

Ryan looked at him glumly, then shrugged. "You better pull yourself together, Mr. Jones. Maybe a drink or two!"

Jones nodded, attempting a smile. "You're right. I'm going up to my apartment for one right now!"

He watched Ryan walk away toward the desk, and then hurried toward the self-operating elevators.

Once inside the elevator, with the penthouse button depressed, Jones drew his right hand from his coat pocket.

What he saw in it brought a cold sweat to his face. He was holding the wallet of Badger Smith!

"I picked his pocket!" Jones muttered incredulously. He stared down at the wallet in a weird fascination, his mind refusing to accept the fact. And yet he knew it was true. With an expertness completely alien to him, with a deft movement that could come from only years of practice, he had picked Ryan's pocket.

"My God!" Jones moaned. *"Why did I do it—why?"*

CARTER T. JONES found it difficult to believe that two days had only passed since the tragedy in his penthouse apartment. He was vaguely aware that he was attending a dinner party given by Beverly Roland. He knew there was a sizable gathering in the Roland mansion, but he was oblivious to them one and all.

He had never acted that way before. It seemed as if his mind just wouldn't accept the world around him—and even less, the people. It seemed almost as if he wasn't there, and yet he knew the thought was fantastic.

He was quite certain that he was sitting at the dinner table, to the right of Beverly herself. He was equally certain that he was attempting to eat a portion of the porterhouse steak that covered a greater portion of his plate, but the food, if it had any taste, failed to register upon him.

Around him there was an air of levity as the guests chatted in between savory mouthsful. He was quite oblivious to the conversations. He was, in fact, unconscious of everything at that moment but his own troubled thoughts.

Jones did have troubled thoughts.

Take yesterday for instance. He had been called down to the office of Inspector Burns at police headquarters to give an official account of what had happened. Closeted with the Inspector in his private office, Jones had told his story over again. The Inspector had been very polite, very courteous, had told him there was nothing to worry

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about, that he was exonerated of all blame—and would be made officially so at the inquest—and then had personally conducted him to the door. Finding himself at such close quarters, Jones had a sudden urge. The urge started in his mind and worked itself down to his fingers. When the Inspector had finally closed the door behind him with a polite good by, Jones found himself holding the police official's wallet.

On the way out of the building he had taken a sudden fancy to an open display of cheap cigarette lighters on a cigar stand counter. He had tried to fight down this strange feeling that overwhelmed him, without success. While the counter girl's attention was distracted by a sale to another customer, Jones deftly pocketed three of the lighters. Once the act had been accomplished the strange feeling disappeared. Out on the street, Jones had broken into a cold sweat of fear. There was no explanation that he could offer to himself for his actions. He had never stolen a thing in his life—he had never had to with a bank account in six figures—and now suddenly overnight he had become what amounted to a petty thief.

There had been other things that gave Jones his troubled thoughts. All little things on the surface, and yet disturbingly epic when he thought about them. Like the stealing of a three cent newspaper from a corner stand in the Loop. And the culminating event of the day when he had gone to his brokerage office on LaSalle Street and had stolen his secretary's compact literally out from under her nose. It had all been done very expertly, much too expertly.

He had spent a very uncomfortable evening at home viewing the spoils of the day piled on his bedroom dresser. And his dreams that night had been very disheartening and instructive at the same time as he found himself casing a jewelry store in his sleep.

He had been even more astounded the next day as he drove down Michigan avenue and saw the identical jewelry store he had dreamt about. It was almost too much for Jones. His life, so orderly and above reproach, had been altered in the space of a few hours.

NOW, as he sat beside Beverly Roland at the dinner party, Jones fervently hoped that whatever had caused him to go off on such a social tangent had passed, permanently, definitely, for once and for all.

Jones became aware of a soft touch upon his arm. He looked around into the sparkling blue eyes of Beverly Roland.

"What's the matter, Cartie? I've never seen you in such a mood before—dinner's over and you haven't touched hardly a thing!"

Jones attempted an apologetic grin. "Sorry, Bev, guess I'm just not hungry."

A frown crossed the girl's forehead. This was a new mood of his, something that she could not understand. Of course, there were many things about Jones that she didn't understand, mainly the fact that so far she hadn't been able to hook him. She knew enough about herself to know that she wasn't bad to look at. She also knew what everyone else didn't—that the Roland fortune was no longer a fortune. There was the mansion, true, and there were the servants and general air of continued prosperity. But this wouldn't keep up much longer unless she could tack the Jones name onto hers.

She looked at the situation quite logically. After all, wouldn't he be getting the best of the bargain—her?

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Naturally.

She laughed suddenly. "Come on, Cartie, we're sitting here like a couple of wooden indians! Care for a liqueur?"

Jones got up mechanically. He became aware that the others had already left the dining room and that the servants were waiting impatiently to clean up the table. He took his hand out of his coat pocket and took her arm. He noticed the servants looking at him as he led Beverly Roland from the room.

"I haven't seen very much of you lately, Cartie," the girl said as they walked.

Jones took his eyes off of the servants and glanced at her. "We've had dinner twice last week."

"Do you call that a lot?" she asked, leaning a little closer against him as they entered the living room.

Jones was very much aware of the pleasant softness of her against him. But he was also aware of something else in the same instant. Something hard was pressing into his side, almost as if she were shoving something—

"Cartie." Beverly Roland looked up at him suddenly. "What have you got in your pocket? Whatever it is it's very sharp!"

She moved away from him at the same time, and Jones, frowning, stopped. He put his hand into his pocket and his fingers closed around cold metal. He withdrew his hand.

Beverly Roland looked at him in consternation. "Why Cartie—that's some of my silverware!"

Jones was painfully aware of it. As cold as the knife and fork were in his hand, just as cold, suddenly, was his heart.

"I, I guess I was a little absent minded, Bev . . ." he managed to say.

"You certainly must have been—what ever made you do a silly thing like that?"

JONES felt a cold sweat beading his forehead. He felt very sick and knew he was trembling. The knife and fork fell limply from his fingers and made a dull plop on the rug.

"I, I don't know—I don't feel very good . . ."

She shook her blonde head laughingly, and then suddenly sobered. There was almost a look of panic in his eyes as she looked at him, and his features were a blanched white.

"Cartie! You *do* look ill—here, sit on the couch—I'll get you a drink."

Jones sat down, abruptly conscious that more than one guest was looking at him with strange curiosity. He studied the Oriental pattern in the rug and tried to get a hold on his nerves. This last thing was too much! Here, among people of his own set, his own friends, he had done it again. It wouldn't have been so bad, he thought, if it had been anybody else—but to steal Beverly's silverware—the girl he hoped to marry some day if he ever got up enough courage to ask her—that was too much . . .

"Here, Cartie, drink this."

She was suddenly beside him on the couch, one hand light and soft on his arm, the other holding a glass.

Jones took the drink and was aware that his hand shook. He clenched the glass savagely and raised it to his lips. The glass chattered against his teeth.

"Cartie! You really *are* ill!" Beverly Roland exclaimed. Gently she took the glass from his hand. "It's a good thing I invited Doctor Houten over tonight—I saw him in the study and mentioned that you didn't look well . . . Maybe you better have him look at you."

Jones was having a hard time keep-

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ing his teeth from chattering. He wasn't cold, he knew that. He was, in fact, hot. He could feel sweat beading his forehead and his collar was getting sticky. Doctor? Did he need a doctor? "For crissake, Jones, get wise to yourself. You don't need a doctor —we're wasting a lot of time—look at all the jewelry floating around this dump!"

Jones stiffened on the couch and shot his head sideways. There was nobody around him but the girl. "That cheap silverware! Better let me take over—we'll clean up!"

"Who said that?" Jones shot to his feet and blurted the words out.

"Cartie!" Beverly Roland took hold of his arm. "Who said what?"

Jones faced her with feverish eyes. "About the silverware—you heard it!"

She stared at him in astonishment. "Why nobody said anything about the silverware . . ."

"But I heard it!"

Slowly she backed away from him, her face white and frowning.

Jones became suddenly aware that he was glaring at her and that he had been shouting the words. In the sudden silence around him he saw guests turned his way and looking coldly at him. He suddenly felt very foolish and tired.

"I'm sorry, Bev, . . . it must be my nerves . . ."

She came forward and took his arm gently. "I think you better see Doctor Houten. You *are* ill!"

ALMOST in a daze Jones let her lead him from the room. He knew that people were following him with their eyes, but he didn't care. He had thoughts for only one thing. That voice. He *had* heard it. And yet . . .

"Hello, Carter. Beverly says you're not feeling very well."

Jones looked into a pair of steel blue eyes. They were friendly but penetrating. The face surrounding them was lean and cleanly shaven, with a small wisp-line mustache on the upper lip. Dr. Houten was a man in his sixties, but his hair was only tinged with gray and he looked forty.

Jones mumbled a greeting and waited. He couldn't think of anything to say. Was there anything?

"I'll take care of him, Beverly. Just see that we're not disturbed."

Jones was vaguely aware of the girl standing beside him. Then suddenly she was gone and he heard a door shut behind him.

"You better sit down, Jones. You look like you're ready to fall apart . . . Here, this chair will do."

Jones sank into the leather lounge chair and gripped the arms firmly to keep his hands from shaking.

The doctor pulled another chair close beside him and then took hold of Jones' left wrist. He held it for awhile, then sat back and looked at Jones.

"Your pulse is racing . . . Tell me just how you feel—any pains?"

Jones shook his head. "I'm not sick, doctor. It isn't anything physical . . ."

The doctor's eyes shaded with half-closed lids. "I see . . . Maybe you better tell me about it."

"About what?"

"About what's bothering you. You're on the verge of a nervous collapse, whether you realize it or not. I have to know what's causing it before I can help you any."

"You'd think I was crazy."

"All of us are a little crazy when you get right down to it. If it will set your mind at rest let me say that I've known you long enough to be perfectly convinced you are sane."

He smiled when he said it, and Jones

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felt a wave of relief. He didn't know why, but he did.

"Thanks, doctor . . . It all started two days ago. I was entering my apartment . . ."

He told it all. And it made him feel better to tell it. It was like having a great weight lifted from his shoulders. Only it wasn't his shoulders. It was his mind. He didn't leave out a thing and he finished with the silverware.

Doctor Houten crossed his knees and lit a cigar. He sat that way for a long moment, and it seemed to Jones that he was studiously studying the smoke swirling up from the glowing cigar end.

Finally he said: "First of all I want to set your mind at ease. There's nothing wrong with you—except you've been suffering a severe emotional strain. The sight of that dead man upset your nervous balance, and all these other things were a natural consequence of your feeling responsible for his death. Subconsciously you've been thinking about him and your emulation of a petty thief is a result of your subconscious thought."

"I see," Jones said, not at all sure that he actually did. "But what can I do to stop it?"

The doctor got to his feet and walked over to an oblong mahogany table. He opened a small brown leather bag.

"I always carry this along with me. Invariably I have to mix business with pleasure . . . I'm going to give you some sedatives and prescribe a few days' rest. I'd suggest you stay in your flat, have your meals brought up, and do nothing but rest. Try to get your mind off of all this. Do a little reading, perhaps listen to the radio. But the important thing is, rest. I'll drop up in a day or so and see how you're getting along. Here," he handed Jones a bottle filled with red capsules. "Take one tonight before you retire, and another after you lunch tomorrow. Two a day."

Jones got up and put the bottle in his pocket. He was surprised to see that his hand was steady. "I feel much better already, doctor. I don't know how to thank you."

Dr. Houten laughed. "You won't thank me when you get my bill!" He took Jones' arm. "I'd suggest you go right home."

Jones frowned. "What'll I tell Beverly?"

The doctor smiled. "I'll take care of her—and the rest of the guests. I'll tell them you've been overworking. Don't worry."

Jones nodded, feeling very much better already.

CURTIS BOBBLE was behind the reception desk when Jones walked into the hotel foyer. The Sheridan Arms manager was dressed in his inevitable pinstripe tweed. From long association with the dapper little man, Jones had come to know that Bobble considered his particular attire a matter of distinction. For anyone else in the hotel—guests included, to wear pinstripe tweeds would have been nothing short of sacrilegious.

"Good evening, Mr. Jones. Good evening, sir!" Bobble's automatic greeting was followed by his automatic smile, a fixed thing, like the pigeons on the eaves of the Art Institute.

Jones nodded. "Evening, Bobble."

"You're home rather early, sir," Bobble observed.

Jones nodded. "I don't feel very well . . . Bobble, there's something I want you to do."

Bobble's thin face became at once concerned and solicitous. "Of course, Sir! Anything at all—I hope it's nothing serious?"

Jones shrugged. "Just overwork.

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What I want you to do is to see that I'm not disturbed for a few days. I want no visitors, and no calls. I'll also want my meals brought up."

Bobble nodded his head gravely. "I understand, sir . . . No visitors at all?"

"Only Dr. Houten, my physician. I'm following his orders. I need rest."

Bobble sighed. "I understand perfectly, Mr. Jones. I feel I should see a doctor myself . . . The strain of these past few days—that unfortunate incident . . ."

Jones swallowed nervously at mention of it. He cleared his throat.

"I believe I've made myself clear, Bobble?"

Bobble looked hurt at this abrupt termination of his own feelings. But he gathered his dignity and even found room for the automatic smile on his face. "I understand perfectly, sir. I'll see that you are not disturbed."

Jones nodded curtly and stalked away to the self-operating elevators. He could feel Bobble looking after him.

JONES sat comfortably in his living room, leaning back in the cushioned depths of an over-stuffed chair. A cigarette smoldered in an ash tray beside him, a scotch highball waited, icy and mellow on the table to his immediate right, and the soft music of Brahms' First Symphony floated across to him from the Capehart phonograph along the opposite wall.

For the first time since "that unfortunate incident," as Bobble had put it, Jones felt like himself. He was at ease. Completely so. Dr. Houten had certainly been right. His imagination had been playing tricks with him. Hell, he could even look at the little pile of objects on the table beside the highball, and laugh.

That cheap lighter. The Inspector's wallet . . . Hmm, he'd have to do something about that—why not mail it back? His secretary's compact. Nuts. She had a hundred of the damn things anyway . . . The dead man's wallet. Oh well, he wouldn't need it any longer.

"Hah, hah!" Jones laughed aloud and then sneered at the little pile. Then he took a long drink from his highball, a longer drag on his cigarette, and sighed contentedly.

Somebody rapped loudly at his front door.

It took a moment for the sound to sink in. When it finally did, the rapping was repeated.

Jones stiffened in his chair. Now who the hell could that be? Hadn't he told Bobble he didn't want any visitors?

The rapping became insistent.

Jones got to his feet angrily and stalked to the door. He had a string of words all ready for whoever it was. And none of them were nice words.

He opened the door.

There was nobody there.

"What the hell!" Jones exclaimed, glancing along the short hall to the elevator. It was still empty.

Something tapped lightly on his knee.

Jones jumped back, startled. Then his eyes swept downward.

He was looking at a little man not more than three feet tall, if he was that much. He had a cherubic little face that was round and smiling, and he had a white flowing beard that came within an inch of his toes. But that wasn't all. He was clad in a blue robe that looked like a baby's nightgown, and on his head was a three cornered hat with a golden tassel.

"Are you ready to go now, Mr. Smith?" he said in a voice that was as deep and soothing as the full bass of an organ.

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Jones was aware that his mouth had dropped open. "I beg your pardon?" he managed to say.

"Come along with me, Mr. Smith. It's best that way," the little man intoned deeply.

Jones got a grip on himself, now that the initial shock had worn off. He looked coldly down his nose at the little man.

"My name is not *Smith!* And who the devil are you?"

The little man shook his head. "Really, Mr. Smith, aren't you going too far? The devil has nothing to do with this. . . . Are you ready to go?"

"The devil be damned!" Jones snapped. "I told you my name is not *Smith!*"

The little man brightened. "That's the correct attitude, Mr. Smith, I'm glad you feel that way. It will help when we get to—"

"You can go to hell!" Jones shouted and slammed the door shut.

HE STOOD trembling angrily for a long moment, watching the door, half expecting the knock to be resumed. He had a good kick in the pants waiting if it was. But it wasn't.

Slowly he walked back into the living room and back to his lounge chair. He lowered himself into it gingerly and reached for his drink.

"Damn that Bobble! I told him I didn't want to be disturbed!" he said angrily.

Then he settled back as the scotch began to restore his good humor.

He lit another cigarette and sipped again at his highball. Across the room, Brahms' First had entered the *Largo*. It was very soothing. He relaxed.

Somebody rapped loudly at his door.

The highball slipped from Jones' fingers and spilled on the rug. He shot to his feet and kicked the glass out of his way. Then he stormed toward the door.

"I'll kick him down the hall—blue robe and all!" he muttered.

He pulled open the door, looked, and his mouth went slack.

"Are you ready to go now, Mr. Smith?"

Jones was staring down at another little man. It could have been the same little man, but his beard was not as long, only a Van Dycke, and his robe was not blue, it was white.

"Say, is this some kind of a joke?" Jones demanded, glaring.

The little man tsk tsk'd. "Really, Mr. Smith, you'll save us all a lot of trouble if you'll come along with me now."

Jones grabbed onto the door jamb to keep his hands from the little man's throat.

"Would you mind telling me why you keep calling me Mr. Smith? And would you also mind telling me why Bobble sent you up here? And would you also mind telling me who the devil you are and where in hell we're supposed to go?"

The little man stepped back, the smile fading from his cherubic face. A look of shocked surprise took its place.

"*Really,* Mr. Smith! You know very well *who* sent me! And calling the devil into this will only make further trouble—and you know very well we're not going to—to hell—yet!"

Jones kept his temper with a great effort. "Will you stop calling me Mr. Smith! My name is Jones! Carter T. Jones—Jones! You've got the wrong floor, and—"

The little man shook his head. "Oh, no. I've got the right floor, and I must say you're being very stubborn."

"*I'm being stubborn!*" Jones gasped out. He clawed the door for support and then took a deep breath. "Look,

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I don't know who you are, and I don't care! But if you think changing from a blue robe to a white one, and trimming your beard has fooled me any, you're sadly mistaken! In just about five seconds I'm going to call the house detective and—"

"Oh, you mean Peter . . ." The little man tsk'd again. "You shouldn't have been so rude with him. You're in a very precarious situation, Mr. Smith, I would advise—"

JONES stepped back and slammed the door. He kicked it shut for good measure and stood waiting. Nothing happened. No knock. No nothing.

"Mr. Smith! *Mr. Smith!*" Jones gasped out and ran for the telephone. The switchboard operator asked a polite, yes?

"The desk!" Jones snapped. "Connect me with Bobble!"

There was a pause, a click, and: "Curtis Bobble speaking."

"Bobble, this is Jones."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Jones. Is anything wrong?"

"Is anything wrong! Bobble, not an hour ago I told you I didn't want to be disturbed!"

"Quite right, sir. I remember distinctly. I've even made a note of it for the clerk and switchboard. Rest assured, sir, that we will follow your instructions."

Jones sneered down the phone. "I'm glad to hear it, Bobble. Would you mind explaining then just why you let those two nitwits up here?"

There was a momentary pause. Then: "Nitwits, Mr. Jones? I don't understand . . ."

"Bobble, my patience will go just so far! You know very well what nitwits I mean—those two little men with beards—the one in a white robe and the other in a blue robe! The men with the beards who keep calling me Mr. Smith!"

There was a longer pause at the other end of the line. Then Jones heard Bobble clearing his throat. "Beards? Blue and white robes? You must be mistaken, Mr. Jones, I—"

"Bobble! Did you or did you not send those three foot midgets up here?"

Bobble cleared his throat again. "I'm sorry Mr. Jones . . . Maybe I had better call your physician. . . "

Jones ground the phone into his face. "Bobble! I don't need my physician! I only want an answer to my question!"

Bobble sputtered. "Of course, sir, of course. . . . No sir, I did not send any little men with beards and blue and white robes up to your suite. . . Are you certain you don't want Dr. Houten?"

Jones shouted into the phone, "No, I don't want Dr. Houten! I only want peace and quiet! Bobble, this is the last time I'm going to tell you—I want no visitors! None!"

He slammed the phone on its cradle and glared at it. Then he strode wearily back into the living room and found his chair. He sank into it, found his cigarette on the ash tray and took a long drag.

THE smoke didn't taste good any longer. Even the music didn't sound peaceful. At a matter of fact, the whole room seemed different. No, it *wasn't* the room or the music or the cigarette. It was himself. . . . *Himself.* . . . "Yuh told them off nice, bud, nice going."

Jones staggered erect and shot his eyes back and forth across the room.

"Who was that? Who said it!"

He couldn't see anybody. And he heard only his own words fading into the far reaches of the flat.

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"Take it easy, chum, you're getting all worked up."

It came again. That voice. The same voice he had heard at Beverly Roland's dinner party! But where was it coming from?

"What's the matter, bud, you can't be as dumb as that! You know damn well where it's coming from!"

Jones fell back into the chair, his body trembling. That voice—*it had answered his thoughts—almost as if, but no, it couldn't be. . . .*

"The hell it ain't, chum. You struck it right in the head. —Hah! That's a good one, ain't it—right in the head!"

Jones let out a groan and groped for a cigarette. Lighting it, he drew smoke hungrily into his lungs and tried desperately to relax.

Yes, that was it, he had to relax. Hadn't Dr. Houten said it was a result of his subconscious mind and overwrought nerves? Of course.

He concentrated on the music. The *andante* of the symphony crept around him in soothing splendor. He let the music carry him, relax him.

Somebody knocked at his front door.

Jones at first wasn't sure he had heard it. But then it came again, a light, almost friendly tapping of fingers on wood.

Very slowly Jones got up from his chair. He knew he was trembling. But he also knew it wasn't from fear or annoyance this time. It was an intense rage that engulfed him, swept over him. So they were back! And Bobble had left them return! Well, he had given them both fair warning!

He started for the door. "I'll knock their heads together—I'll throw them down the stairs—and then I'll—"

He opened the door, looking down.

He didn't see either of the little men smiling up at him. He saw two very trim, two very beautiful legs. They were fitted into a pair of brilliantly red shoes with twin diamond studded tridents as buckles. One of the shoes was tapping lightly on the floor.

Slowly, Jones' gaze traveled upward. He followed the legs with his eyes and was reluctant to leave them. Somehow, those legs did something to him inside, something a pair of legs had never done before.

He saw the hem of a brilliantly red dress, as red as the shoes. It was a close fitting dress and he didn't have to see the body beneath it to know that it was a very nice body. He came to a bosom that was firm and full, with two diamond trident broaches, one over each, the forks pointing downward, as arrows. He decided instinctively that they were unnecessary.

Then he saw her face.

HE HAD never seen a face so beautiful. Her features were perfect, just enough chin, a delicately matched nose, cheeks with a shadow of red—he was certain it wasn't rouge, and flowing raven black hair.

And eyes.

He had seen many eyes in his life. But never eyes like this. They were large and bright and gleaming, and green. They were swirling pools, enticing, bewitching, and hostile. They were eyes you could gaze into for eternity and never want to leave.

Her lips were smiling at him.

"Well, Mr. Smith, I've come for you."

He heard the words in a low husky voice and it broke the weird fascination of his gaze.

He cleared his throat with an effort. "I beg your pardon, Miss—"

The smile faded from her face for an instant and he saw something there that swept centuries back—and then just as suddenly was gone.

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"Am I addressing Mr. Smith—or Jones?" she asked lowly.

Jones was begining to doubt whether he knew what his name was himself. One thing he was certain of however, that this woman was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen.

"Jones. Carter T. Jones, Miss—"

The smile came back to her lips, and it was a wider smile that spread to the green depths of her eyes. A low tinkling laughter bubbled from her lips.

"Ah, Mr. Jones. I see . . ."

There was nothing funny about it that Jones could see. But somehow he didn't resent her laughter. Then he grew abruptly aware of the situation, that he had given Bobble strict orders . . .

He cleared his throat again. "How did you get up here, Miss—"

She swayed a little closer to him and Jones caught the faint fragrance of musk and sandalwood, aromas of long forgotten ages, of . . .

"I came up, Mr. Jones," her voice was low and husky and friendly.

Jones frowned. "Did Bobble send you?"

"Bobble?" She rolled the word around as if it were a small pebble. Then she laughed again, the small tinkling laughter. "No, Bobble didn't send me. . . ."

"Then who did, Miss— you do have a name I presume?"

For an instant her smile faded and once again Jones caught that bared look of centuries unmasked. Then the smile was there again. "Name? Oh, yes. . . . I have been called many things, Mr. Jones."

It was like pulling teeth, and very annoying, but somehow Jones couldn't get angry—looking at her. "You were saying?" he prompted.

She hesitated a moment before answering. Then: "You may call me—Lucy."

"Lucy. That's a very pretty name. Now may I ask just what I can do for you?"

She laughed again and moved closer to him. He could have reached her lips by leaning forward just a little.

"I think *I* can do more for *you,* Mr. Jones."

Jones drew back self-consciously. "For me? What can you do for me?"

HER eyes became half-shaded by long darkly lashed lids. It was an expression as old as time itself that Jones saw there. It sent his pulse racing by what it told him. There was promise there. Eden couldn't have promised more.

"That music, it is so beautiful, don't you think, Mr. Jones? . . . Brahms was such a strange man."

The music. Yes, Brahms' First was still playing. It brought a sudden touch of reality to Jones. He put his hand on the doorknob.

"I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me, I, I'm not supposed to have visitors . . . my doctor . . ."

Her eyes engulfed him in a warm green pool. "You do not look like a sick man, Mr. Jones. But you do look like a man who is lonely and wants companionship. . . . I am very much like you, Mr. Jones, lonely. . . "

Jones gulped. And before the gulp was completed she had brushed past him and into the flat. A tingle swept through him at that touch. He knew he should have told her to leave, even forced her.

He shut the door.

She was already in the living room as Jones entered. She had moved past his lounge chair and the table where his cigarette still smoldered in an ash tray, and seated herself on the wide divan close to the Capehart.

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Jones stood beside his chair uncertainly, looking at her. She had crossed her knees and the hem of her dress had made a flattering retreat. It disturbed Jones. So much that he had to put his hands behind his back and lock his fingers. Even so they trembled.

"Would you like to make me a drink, Mr. Jones?" she said very lowly, very pleasantly.

It was something to do, and Jones was looking for something. He turned his back to her and went to the liquor cabinet. The music stopped playing on the Capehart as he poured scotch. He turned his head and saw her standing beside the machine, an open album on top of the machine, and inserting a new record.

He finished adding ice and water and picked up the glasses. Music floated across to him as he crossed to the divan where she had seated herself again. It was a weird flow of sound and he recognized it immediately. It was Moussourgsky's *A Night On The Bare Mountain.*

He had always like the music, but not now. It spoke in strings and brass and woodwinds a song of death. Of haunting things that rose with the night from their graves. Of spirits chained with evil and suddenly released for a brief moment.

It was in the room. But then, as he looked at her, the friendly smile beckoning to him, the eyes, half-shaded again into tempting pools of languor; he didn't mind it. It somehow fitted, eased the tenseness within him.

He handed her the glass.

"I hope you don't mind scotch."

She sipped at it. "Won't you sit down—here."

JONES swallowed nervously, half-turned toward his lounge chair. Then he found his feet pointed back to the divan, and he sat down.

Her body touched his, warm, soft, intimately. He took a long pull from his glass.

"You haven't told me why you came to see me," he said.

Her hand rested lightly on his. "I came to see Mr. Smith. . . . But you are more important now."

He frowned. "But there isn't any Smith living here! Those two little guys made the same mistake!"

She laughed then, and there was a coldness in the sound. "*They* were so sure of themselves—as *they* always are! *They* didn't realize that you would have to go too, before . . ."

Jones turned, facing her. "Look here, Miss—ah, Lucy, just what is this all about? Where is this Smith and where do you want to take him?"

She sipped again at her drink and then looked at him over the glass, her eyes wide and intent upon him. "Let us forget about Mr. Smith for the moment. . . . Are you afraid of me, Mr. Jones?"

"Afraid of you?" Jones remained lost in the beauteous swirl of her eyes. "On the contrary . . . I think you are very beautiful, and, and—"

"And you think our being together might lead to sin?"

He flushed. "I, I hadn't thought of it in that way. . ."

"But now you're hoping it will?"

He was aware that the glass slipped from his fingers and fell to the rug. It didn't matter. All that mattered was Lucy, swaying toward him, lips parted, beckoning, the musk and sandalwood of her dizzying him, the smothering touch of her body against his.

Someone rapped loudly at the front door.

He leapt to his feet, startled, facing the door.

"Don't go!" She cried out, reaching

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for him. *"They* can't have you now!"

Jones was thinking much the same thing. There was only one person he wanted now, and that was Lucy.

The rapping came again.

"I'll handle them!" he said angrily, and strode to the door.

The first thing he saw was Bobble. The hotel manager was standing on the threshold, wringing his hands apologetically. Over Bobble's shoulder he could see the tall, uniformed figure of Sergeant Ryan.

"I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Jones," Bobble blurted out. "I realize that you left strict orders not to be disturbed—but the Sergeant was very insistent."

"I've got to talk to you about that accident the other night, Mr. Jones," Ryan supplied. "Mind if we come in?"

Jones was about to say that he minded very much. He was also about to slam the door in their faces. But he didn't. Bobble had stepped to the side and Jones got a good look at the police sergeant.

He was looking down at Ryan's left hand. Something was holding onto it. It was one of the little men, the one in the white robe with the Van Dycke beard.

The little man started forward, and Ryan followed. Jones backed into the flat, his eyes staring in disbelief.

"Thank you, Mr. Jones," Ryan said, moving into the flat. "I won't trouble you very long."

Jones got a grip on himself. "But I've got company. . . "

Bobble was just entering the living room. His eyesbrows shot up. "Company, Mr. Jones? But that's impossible! I personally saw to it that nobody—"

Jones sneered at him. "You've got the gall to stand there and say that after I called you about those little men—and now you bring one of them back up here yourself!"

Bobble's mouth dropped. "Me? Little men?—Now?"

JONES let his anger rise. He faced both Bobble and Ryan. "Both of you know very well what I mean! There—the one that's got Ryan's hand right now!"

Bobble turned to look at Ryan's right hand. Ryan himself lifted it as the little man left go.

"You don't have to look at your hand!" Jones shouted. "He's standing right beside you!"

Both Bobble and Ryan looked at each other, then swiftly around them, and then back at Jones. There was surprise in their eyes, amazement, and puzzlement.

"But there's nobody here! . . ." Bobble protested.

"Nobody here!" Jones shouted back. "Are you both blind?—Lucy!" Jones turned to the divan where Lucy stood, her face strangely white and tense. "Lucy—tell these two nitwits—"

Jones' voice broke off in mid-sentence as he looked at the divan. Lucy wasn't there.

Jones didn't believe his eyes. She *had* been there! Just a moment ago . . .

"Harrumph! . . ."

Jones turned slowly back to Bobble and Ryan. The police sergeant was clearing his throat.

"If this is some kind of a joke, sir. . . . Little men and visitors. . . ."

Jones heard the words, but he was also aware of something else in the same instant. The little man was gone too.

"Where did he go?" Jones demanded.

"Where did he who go, Mr. Jones?" Bobble asked solicitously, a certain nervousness creeping into his voice.

"That little guy who came in with

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you!" Jones hollered back, his eyes sweeping the room and finally resting on the front door. "You let them leave!" He shouted and sped across the room to the foyer.

The hall was empty when he opened the door, but the needle dial of the elevator was going down. Jones turned back to his flat triumphantly.

"The elevator's going down! Now try and tell me you didn't see them leave!"

Ryan had his cap off and was busily scratching his head. Bobble had gone back to rubbing his hands nervously.

"But, Mr. Jones, I assure you we—that is, I—saw nobody. . . ." Bobble sputtered and glanced to Ryan for help.

The police sergeant put his cap back on. "This has gone far enough, sir," he said emphatically. "I came up here on business."

Jones stalked over to the table beside his lounge chair and picked up a cigarette beside the pile of articles he had gathered during the two previous days.

He lit it nervously. "Business? I don't have any business with you, Ryan! I want only to be left alone. I—"

"Harrumph." Ryan cleared his throat again. "The business I have, sir, will only take a few moments. There's a question I want to ask you."

Jones sighed deeply. Any questions that Ryan might have were far from significant to him at the moment. Why had Lucy gone? And where had she gone?

"Very well, Ryan, ask your question."

THE police sergeant shifted his feet uncomfortably. "It isn't exactly a question, sir. . . . You remember when we were leaving the service room after the accident—and you were walking right behind me?"

Jones remembered only too well. He nodded.

"Well, now, it's a funny thing, but I had the dead man's wallet in my coat pocket, and after you bumped into me on the stairs, well, that is, I didn't have it anymore."

Jones stiffened. So that was it! The wallet! A tremor of fear swept through Jones as his eyes fell to the table beside him. There, on top of the heap, was the wallet.

Beside Ryan, Bobble's face had a shocked look. "Sergeant! Surely you don't mean that *Mr. Jones* . . ."

But Ryan wasn't listening. His round Irish face was shoved forward menacingly. "That's it!" He pointed toward the table. "That's the wallet right there!"

Jones tried to step in Ryan's way, but he found himself stumbling sideways as the police sergeant shoved him aside. From somewhere behind him he could hear Bobble's protesting yelp.

When Jones finally got his feet under control he saw Ryan coming toward him angrily, the wallet of the dead man held accusingly in his hand.

"You had it all the time—and there's only one way you could get it! You picked my pocket on the stairs!"

Jones started backing up, a prickly fear crawling up his spine. This was what he had feared, to be caught for something he had done and didn't know why. . . .

"You're wrong, Ryan!" Jones blurted out as he backed up against the wall. "I, I found the wallet in the lobby—on the floor, I—"

"You couldn't have! I searched the lobby myself after I found the wallet was gone from my pocket! You deliberately bumped into me and picked my pocket! Why? Was it because you were afraid we might find something

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out? Maybe that Smith hadn't been killed in an accident?"

Jones felt his head spinning as Ryan loomed before him. He could see himself in a cold dark cell and later in a crowded courtroom, and then . . .

The front door snapped open in the foyer.

Ryan wheeled around abruptly. Jones took the momentary advantage to scoot away from the wall and head for the lounge chair, to put it between himself and Ryan.

He stopped halfway there, facing the front hall.

Dr. Houten was walking into the living room, his leather case in one hand, and a little man—the one in the blue robe, with the flowing beard—holding on to the other. There was a benevolent smile on the little man's face as he looked up at Jones. "Don't worry, Mr. Jones, Paul and I understand everything now."

"You!" Jones gasped out. "What are you doing here again?"

Dr. Houten said: "I haven't been here before, Mr. Jones—but something told me you might need my help, so I decided to come over before retiring. . . . What seems to be the trouble here?"

Jones glared at the doctor. "I'm not talking to you! I mean that little guy in the blue robe you came in with!"

The doctor shook his head. "You must be mistaken. I came up on the elevator alone."

Ryan let out a roar. "Are we going to start that all over again?"

The little man smiled up at Jones. "Don't worry, Mr. Jones, everything will be all right. —Mr. Smith, are you ready to go now?"

"Don't call me Mr. Smith!" Jones shouted at the little man.

Ryan shouted back: "I didn't call you Mr. Smith!"

"I didn't say you did!" Jones snapped. "I was talking to that little guy beside Dr. Houten—he and the other guy, the one you brought up, keep calling me Smith! My name is not Smith!"

RYAN threw up his hands in despair. "I give up!" He turned to the doctor. "Maybe you can tell me what this is all about! Ever since Bobble and I walked in here he's been hollering about two little men and a visitor that isn't here!"

Jones moved over beside the doctor. "You just said you came up on the elevator, doctor—then you must have seen Lucy and that little guy leaving!"

Dr. Houten stared steadily at Jones. He shook his head. "The elevator was up when I came in. I had to press the down button. It was empty when I entered it."

Jones' mouth dropped. "But that's impossible! . . ."

Ryan shoved him aside. "Are you Mr. Jones' physician?"

"I am," Houten replied.

"Then would you mind telling me if he's off his bat? I came up here in connection with the accidental death that happened the other day. I found a wallet on that table that Jones must have lifted from my pocket at the time of the accident. This whole thing looks fishy to me. . . . I think I'll take him down to headquarters and—"

Bobble danced excitedly up to Ryan. "Sergeant! You can't do that! Think of the scandal — the hotel's name — think of Mr. Jones!"

"The hotel be damned!" Ryan snorted. "And if you don't keep out of this I'll run you in too, Bobble!"

Dr. Houten raised his hand. "Just a minute, sergeant, let me handle this."

Houten took Jones by the arm and gently guided him to the divan. Jones

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sat down, aware that his teeth were chattering, and that his body was trembling. Somebody said: "Don't let this bull get you down, bud! And tell this Peter shrimp to mind his own business—I'm with you!"

"Who said that?" Jones yelped and tried to get to his feet.

The doctor shoved him back firmly. "Nobody said anything, Mr. Jones. Now just try and relax—nobody is going to hurt you. Here, have a cigarette."

Jones took the proffered cigarette and drew smoke hungrily as Houten applied a match. What was the matter with all these people? Were they crazy? Or were they deliberately trying to unnerve him?

"Now just relax. We're going to discuss this calmly together. Now tell me, what has happened since you returned from Beverly's?"

The doctor's voice was soothing. Jones let out a sigh and sank back against the rear of the divan. He couldn't help thinking that a short time before Lucy had been there. He glanced up at Ryan and Bobble, standing a few feet away. Ryan had his hands shoved belligerently into his pockets, his face red and angry. Bobble was wringing his hands and trying to keep his feet still. He couldn't see the little man, but somehow it didn't seem to matter.

"That's it," Dr. Houten's voice soothed. "Relax. . . . Now tell me what you've been doing since I sent you home."

Jones told him. He told him wearily, every single thing that had happened from the first knock on his door. Then he straightened and looked appealingly to the doctor.

"You do believe me, don't you, doctor?"

Ryan snorted. "You see what I mean, doctor? He's cooked up this story to try and cover up something! I'm going to take him down to headquarters!"

Dr. Houten shook his head. "I'm afraid not, sergeant. Mr. Jones is my patient, and is suffering from extreme nervous shock. Besides, what evidence do you have that Mr. Jones picked your pocket? It's your word against his."

Ryan puffed his cheeks. "But I *know* he did it! I—"

"You couldn't prove a thing. Besides, Jones is under my care. I'm taking him to my hospital. He needs medical attention, and above all, rest."

Ryan glowered at the doctor for a moment, then shrugged. "All right, have it your own way. But don't think I'm letting this case drop now! I'm begining to think that maybe this whole business wasn't an accident! . . . Little men with beards . . . humpf!"

Houten turned to Jones. "Come along with me, you've got nothing to worry about."

Jones started at the words. He had heard them before. Then he glanced down at the doctor's right hand. The little man in the blue robe was standing there holding onto it. He was smiling up at Jones, and nodding his head in agreement.

It was too much for Jones. The room swirled, grew hazy, and then went black. . . .

HE WAS in bed. It was a nice bed, all white and clean and crisp. The room was nice too. It had white walls and a white ceiling. There was a little white table next to the bed with a white pitcher on it, and a telephone. Everything was white. Nice and clean and white.

Jones felt good. There was bright, warm sunlight flooding in through the window, and it touched him where he

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lay on the bed. He lay quite still and focused his thoughts. The last thing he remembered was being back in his flat with Dr. Houten telling him to come along. . . . Yes. He remembered now. The little man had been holding onto the doctor's hand.

Oh, hell. Maybe the whole thing had been just a nightmare. Maybe Houten had been right after all. Maybe it was just his nerves. Of course.

The door opened and a crisp young thing in white came smiling in. She walked up to Jones and laid a smooth cool hand on his forehead.

"Good morning, Mr. Jones. Did you have a nice sleep?"

Jones sighed up at her. "Yes, I did. I've never felt better in my life. When can I get up?"

The nurse smiled. "Oh, not for some time yet. Dr. Houten wants you to get a good rest. You've been pretty close to a breakdown, you know."

Jones sighed again. "Yes, I guess I have. . . . Is the doctor here?"

The nurse smoothed his sheets down. "No, but he'll be here within an hour. Is there anything you want?"

Jones shook his head. "Not a thing—except maybe, breakfast, and—" he asked hesitantly, "have there been any visitors for me?"

"Just one—a Sergeant Ryan from police headquarters, but you don't have to worry about him. The Doctor left strict orders that you were not to be disturbed. As for breakfast, I'll bring it in to you in a few minutes."

She turned away then, with another bright smile, and Jones watched her close the door behind her as she left.

He sighed peacefully.

"Pretty nice dump, bud. It's a pleasure to relax like this."

Jones shot upright on the bed. His eyes took in the small confines of the room. "Who said that? Where are you?"

"Take it easy, chum, ain't you got used to me yet? I'm right here on the bed, with you."

"With me?" Jones swallowed hard and sank back against the pillow. He knew there wasn't anyone else in the room. He also knew he wasn't insane—maybe. That left only one possibility. . . .

"That's right, doc, you're cookin' with gas now."

So it *was* true! *There was a voice speaking from within his mind!*

"I'm not only speaking, chum, I kinda like this body of yours. We're going to have to reach a partnership on it pretty soon too. If you're smart you'll play ball."

Jones swallowed again, conscious that sweat was breaking out on his forehead. "Who are you?" he asked.

"Hah! That's a good one. Who am I? You know damn well who I am. Badger Smith—that's me!"

Smith! Suddenly a great many things became clear. That was why Lucy and those little men kept calling him—

"Yeh, while we're on the subject, let's decide now about those two little geezers. Listen, chum, I ain't quite strong enough yet to fight them alone. I'm going to need your help. If you're smart you'll tell them to blow from now on. Get it?"

Jones didn't get it at all. There was a lot more he wanted to know. "Listen, just what is this—"

THE door opened and the nurse pushed a small breakfast table into the room. She smiled at him. "Were you saying something, Mr. Jones?"

Jones shook his head vigorously. "No, I was just talking to myself—"

His voice broke off. Following the nurse into the room, pushing against

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the legs of the wheeled table, were the two little men. Their three-cornered hats were plunked solidly on their heads, and the golden tassels were swaying as they walked.

The nurse walked up to the bed and lifted a tray from the table. She set it on Jones' lap and then looked at him.

"Why Mr. Jones—you're sweating! Is there anything wrong?"

"Huh?" Jones looked blankly at her. "Wrong? No—no. . . . Do you see anybody else here?"

The nurse frowned. "You mean in this room?"

Jones nodded half-heartedly.

"Why of course not. Are you sure you feel all right? Maybe I had better call the intern. . . ."

Jones forced a laugh. "Oh, no. . . . I'm all right—just hungry. . . "

She looked at him for a long moment, and then smiled. "Very well, have your breakfast. When you want me just push that little button on the table."

She turned and walked from the room, closing the door after her.

Jones stared down at the two little men beside his bed. He waited for the voice inside him to say something, but it didn't.

The little man in the blue robe nodded, his cherubic face friendly and smiling.

"Good morning,—Mr. Smith, are you ready to go now?"

Jones stared for a long moment at them, then slowly he nodded.

"Yes, I think so."

There was a desperate upsurgence of protest deep within Jones as he said the words, but he fought it back with every bit of will power he possessed.

The little man in the blue robe looked happily at the one in white. "You see, Peter, he is coming along with us!"

The one in white nodded. "Yes, Paul, it is best this way. . . . We are ready to go, Mr. Smith."

Jones took a deep breath. He had to find out what this was all about. Just who these two goofy midgets were tied up with, and where they wanted to go.

"But how will we get out of the hospital?" Jones asked.

Peter shook his head, whisking the tops of his upturned shoes with his beard. "Oh, but that won't be necessary, Mr. Smith, just—"

"It certainly will!" Jones snapped. "We can get a cab outside—if we can get by the desk. That's the way I want it!"

Peter looked over at Paul. Paul shrugged. "If that's the way he wants to go, we might as well arrange it. But it's all so unnecessary."

"I'll get my clothes from the closet and meet you outside in a few minutes." Jones said emphatically.

The two little men shrugged in unison. "Very well, Mr. Smith. We'll be waiting."

HE WATCHED them open the door and leave. Then he shot from the bed and across the room to the closet door. His clothes were neat on hangers. He was slipping into his pants when: "For crissakes, what did you do that for? I should have known better than to trust you!"

Jones ground his teeth and ignored the voice. It faded into a dim wail deep inside him as he finished dressing. He turned toward the door.

The telephone on the bed table started ringing.

Jones stiffened. Should he answer it? Yes, he had to. It was probably Dr. Houten, and if he didn't answer somebody would be sent to investigate. . . . He stalked over to the table and picked up the receiver.

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"Hello?"

"Mr. Jones?" A low, husky, silken voice soothed across the wire.

Jone stiffened, recognizing the voice. "Lucy! What hapened to you? How did you know I was here?"

She laughed, the small tinkling laughter that made Jones think of pebbles rolling in the surf. "I've been in your apartment—waiting. . . ."

A strange thrill swept through Jones. It was as if an aura spread itself over him with the mere sound of her voice. "But—you left! Why?"

"I was only gone for a little while, Mr. Jones. . . . It was necessary. . . . But I'm here now—waiting for you. Do you want me, Mr. Jones?"

Jones swallowed hard. He had promised the little men he would go with them. *"The hell with those guys, chum! Boy, what a piece! What are we waiting for?"* The words echoed loudly inside Jones. He tried to quell them, but without success. *"This is where I come in, bud! We'll give those two goons the slip!"*

The tinkling laughter came again over the phone. "I'm waiting here, Mr. Jones—come to me. . . ."

The phone went dead and Jones replaced the receiver with a trembling hand. She was waiting for him. Lucy. Lucy with the red, inviting lips, beckoning body, the green, swirling eyes that haunted him.

Jones shuddered, and knew he had to go. Lucy was all that mattered. Lucy was waiting. . . .

He opened the door and stepped out into the hall. At the far end he saw the two little men. They nodded at him, smiling.

He walked up to them.

"Everything is ready, Mr. Smith. We can go now."

Jones kept his eyes away from them. "Fine. Let's go."

They went down the steps at the end of the hall to the first floor. The little men placed themselves one on either side of him.

THEY went down the long corridor to the front of the hospital, and the reception desk. Jones held his breath as he saw a group of doctors standing beside the desk. One of them was Dr. Houten. If he saw him. . . .

They kept right on walking, passed the group of men, and for a moment Jones was sure Dr. Houten was looking straight at him. But if he saw Jones he gave no indication of it. Jones followed the little men through the front door and out onto the street.

There was a taxi waiting at the curb. The little man in the blue robe pointed. "Just as you wanted it, Mr. Smith. We have the taxi waiting."

Jones gave a quick look at the cab. Then: *"O.k. chum, what are we waiting for? Let's beat it!"*

For a moment Jones tried to resist the thought. Then, suddenly, his feet moved and he was running down the street.

Behind him he could hear the little men calling loudly. He ran faster. Around the corner of the hospital, up the block, around another corner, and then he found himself on North Clark street. A cab was just cruising past the corner when he reached it.

"Hey—taxi!" Jones shouted.

The cab skidded to a halt and Jones piled inside. He glanced once out the window down the street. The little men were not in sight.

"Where to, mister?"

Jones gasped: "Sheridan Arms Hotel." Then he leaned back against the seat, gulping in breath hungrily. . . .

Curtis Bobble was behind the desk when Jones walked into the hotel foyer.

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His eyebrows shot up in amazement as he saw Jones.

"Mr. Jones! What are you doing here? I thought—"

"I live here—remember, Bobble?" Jones snapped.

"But, sir, the hospital—Dr. Houten . . ."

Jones walked up to the desk and put his hands on the counter. "Bobble, I don't want any trouble from you. Just remember that as long as I'm a tenant here! And further, I don't want any visitors today—understand? *Nobody!*"

Bobble nodded bewilderedly. "Of course, sir . . . No visitors."

"That's right, Bobble. Just see that you remember it!"

Jones turned abruptly away and headed for the elevator. He could sense the hotel manager's eyes following him.

SHE was seated on the divan, just as she had been seated the day previous. She had on the same red dress with the bediamonded trident broaches on each breast. They were still pointing and Jones still thought they were unnecessary.

There was music floating into the room from the Capehart. It was the same piece she had played yesterday. *A Night on the Bare Mountain.*

She was smiling at him, warmly, friendly, enticingly.

"I've been waiting, Mr. Jones." She said it lowly, barely audible above the sound of the music.

Looking at her, Jones felt his head swim. She did something to him that no woman had ever done before. She made him dizzy with desire, oblivious of all else. Only her.

"Come, Mr. Jones. . . . Come here, beside me."

Jones went. *"Look at her, bud! She's worth a thousand of those little guys! I'd do anything for her! I'd rob and kill if she wanted me to!—And so would you!"*

It was true, and Jones suddenly knew it. Nothing mattered but Lucy. He sat beside her.

She was in his arms. Love, ecstasy, passion, desire. In his arms. He found her lips. They seared against his, crushing irons of flame that swept through him, racing his pulse to a maddening tempo that strangely rose with the crescendo of the music wavering over them.

Then she ended the brutal kiss and stared into his eyes, her breath, close and hot against his face.

"This is the beginning of our sin, Mr. Jones. . . . Our sin. . . . It will unite us—bring you to me. . . ."

Then her lips seared his again. His pulse rose to a burning throb that could only be satisfied by—

A loud knock sounded at the front door.

The sound broke the madness of their embrace and Jones felt a raging anger course through him.

Lucy held him, her eyes swirling depths of promise. "Do not go! It is I you want! *They* can give you nothing. . . . Come to me. . . ."

Jones heard the knocking repeated. Then from within him: *"The hell with them little guys—nothing is gonna drag me away now!"*

Nothing. Nothing in the world. The voice was right. Nothing but Lucy mattered. The hell with them. Let them knock.

His arms tightened around her.

There was the grating of a key in the lock of the front door. Then suddenly is swung open.

"Mr. Jones! It's me—Curtis Bobble—are you all right?"

Jones broke away from Lucy and shot to his feet. His head spun dizzily.

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He faced the outer hall.

BOBBLE came striding into the living room like a frightened scarecrow. His long thin neck jutted out as he peered into the room.

And behind him came Beverly Roland.

"Cartie! You've had me worried half to death!" Beverly Roland exclaimed as she stopped half away across the room, staring at him wide-eyed, her cheeks flushed.

Jones gulped and looked down at Lucy. He knew he was in for it now. He would never be able to explain away Lucy's presence in his flat—alone with him. Then he caught Lucy's eyes. They were angry, smoldering pools of green flame that engulfed him. His head spun and he suddenly didn't care about Beverly. To hell with what she thought.

"Get rid of her!" Lucy's voice reached his ears sharply.

"Yeh, chum, she's crowdin' our act! Throw her out!" The voice inside him snarled.

Jones turned weakly to Beverly Roland. Behind her Curtis Bobble was nervously wringing his hands. The hell with Bobble.

"Bev . . . Bev, I know seeing Lucy here must be a shock to you, but—"

"Lucy? Cartie—whatever are you talking about?"

Jones shook his head. "You don't have to pretend, Bev. It's no go—between us anymore . . . Lucy and I—"

"Cartie! Will you stop this! What Lucy are you talking about?"

Jones touched Lucy with his hand. "*This* Lucy—sitting here on the divan. I'm sorry, Beverly."

Beverly Roland bit her lips as she stared at the couch. Then she looked up at Jones with tears in her eyes.

"You poor dear. . . . You really *are* sick, aren't you!"

Curtis Bobble shuffled hesitantly up beside the girl. "You see what I mean, Miss Roland? Isn't it simply terrible? He keeps talking about people that, that—"

Beverly cut him off, shaking her head meaningfully. Then she turned and walked toward Jones, a smile brightening the dampness of her cheeks.

"Cartie, please let me take care of you. When I found out from Dr. Houten that you were very ill I suddenly realized something that I didn't know before . . . I; I'm in love with you very much Cartie. Please let me help you now . . ."

Jones felt Lucy grab his fingers. It was a strange tingling feeling that swept through him, that awakened his desires. "Don't listen to her! Get rid of her!" Lucy's voice rose loudly.

Jones looked down at her. Lucy's eyes were suddenly magnetic forces that drew him irresistibly. They were unmasked into something age-old something terrible, something ghastly and weirdly fascinating at the same time. "Kill her! Kill her! Then you will belong only to me!"

Jones felt a light touch on his arm. He broke his eyes away from Lucy and saw Beverly Roland standing beside him.

"Keep away from me!" Jones gasped out and backed away from the girl.

Beverly glanced helplessly after him. Her lips trembled. "I'm sorry, Cartie. I'm going to call Dr. Houten."

She turned and went toward the telephone on the opposite side of the room.

Jones called after her: "I don't want Dr. Houten! Beverly—keep away from that phone!"

The girl didn't pause. She reached the phone stand and closed her fingers around the receiver.

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JONES knew he had to stop her from phoning. He also knew he had to get her out of the flat. He also knew, somehow, vaguely, that he loved this wisp of a girl, but it didn't seem to matter now . . .

"Beverly! For the last time—keep away from that phone!" Jones shouted.

The girl lifted the receiver to her ear.

Jones ran across the room. He stopped beside the girl and pulled the receiver from her fingers. Then he laid both of his hands on her shoulders. He wanted to guide her gently, but firmly from the room. He wanted to push her through the front door and then come back for Bobble. He knew what he wanted to do. But—

"You heard what Lucy said, bud! This is where I take over!"

He had started to push the girl gently across the room. Then, suddenly, his fingers became vises of steel on her shoulders. His muscles bunched and then he shoved her violently away from him, with every ounce of strength his body possessed.

The girl gave a frightened cry and flew backwards against the wall. There was a loud thump as her head struck the floor moulding, a louder snap, and then silence.

"Mr. Jones! Mr. Jones!" Bobble shrieked.

Jones stared blankly down at the girl's inert form. His brain refused to believe what he saw there. Beverly, still and limp, a dark red stain spreading from her flaxen hair.

There was a loud pounding at the front door. Jones raised his eyes stupidly from the girl's still form to watch Bobble run and open it.

Sergeant Ryan, led by the little man in the blue robe, came storming in. Behind him, Dr. Houten, his right hand held by the little man in white, followed.

"Sergeant! Dr. Houten!" Bobble exclaimed loudly. "Mr. Jones—he just threw Miss Roland against the wall! Hurry, doctor!"

Jones stood helplessly, unable to move a muscle. He watched as Dr. Houten sped across the room and knelt beside the girl. The doctor felt her pulse briefly, flicked her eyelid upward, and then rose slowly.

Ryan had moved over beside the girl's body. His face was red and tense. "Well, doctor?"

Houten turned slowly to Jones. His face was pale and grim. "She's dead."

Jones became aware of a number of things at once. He heard a loud shriek of laughter from Lucy. But it wasn't the kind of laughter he had heard her utter before. It was evil and gloating and triumphant. At the same time he heard Bobble moaning miserably, and Ryan shouting.

"Did you hear that, Jones? She's dead! You killed her!"

Jones' lips moved numbly. "No . . . No! I didn't kill her! I didn't! I couldn't do such a thing!"

Ryan snarled: "You can save all that for the jury! You killed her all right—Bobble saw you do it! I'm arresting you for murder!"

Ryan lumbered forward toward Jones.

Jones was waiting. He didn't care anymore. Let Ryan take him away. He deserved it. Beverly. Oh, God, *Beverly!*

"We gotta get out of here!"

THE words shrieked in sudden fear through Jones' mind. Once again, just as when his fingers touched Beverly's shoulders, he felt his body moving. He didn't know why it was moving, and he didn't want it to move. But

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it did.

"Bobble! Cut off the front door—he's trying to escape!" Ryan shouted.

Jones found himself racing across the living room. Then abruptly he found his body turning and hurtling in the opposite direction. Behind him he felt Ryan at his heels.

"Gotta beat it out of here! We're trapped!"

Everything was a kaleidoscope of sound and movement, a dizzying whirl of shrieking laughter from Lucy, hoarse cries from Ryan and Bobble, the sound of his own feet racing across the room, and the louder thud of Ryan's in pursuit.

Something loomed ahead of him. A door. He hit it with the full impact of his body and it swished inward. Then he was in darkness, his feet swishing on smooth linoleum.

The kitchen. The kitchen!

"Gotta get out of here! One way—"

It was like a clock turning time backward. Running in the darkness. Pursuit. The kitchen. He had done this before . . .

He felt his fingers scraping against the far wall of the kitchen. He felt a panel slide back in the wall just as the kitchen door shot inward again and Ryan shouted: "Stop! Stop or I'll fire!"

Jones' body lifted from the floor and into the opening in the wall. Gropingly his fingers felt for—the dumbwaiter. *The dumbwaiter!*

But it wasn't there.

A moment of dizzy unbalance. An eternity of futile clawing for support. And his body toppled forward into the shaft.

A shriek of fear left his lips as he fell. *"Gotta get out! I'm falling! . . ."*

From some dimness of his mind, Jones knew it wasn't his voice that was shrieking. And then suddenly the voice was gone, and along with it he had a sense of freedom, lightness, as if a great weight had suddenly been cast from him.

It was all he felt. There wasn't time for more. A roaring, smashing, devastating impact blotted all else out. Nothing more. Nothing. . . .

He was standing in the service room of the hotel. He felt funny. A curious lightness and a sense of ease he had never known. He looked around.

A knot of people were grouped ahead of him, before the dumbwaiter shafts. He could hear a babble of words as he came closer. The words didn't mean much. There was shock in them, shock and horror.

He saw Bobble. The hotel manager was standing at the rear of the knot of people, his head shaking woefully from side to side, his fingers nervously wringing themselves. Jones walked up to him.

"Bobble, what's going on down here?"

Bobble kept on wringing his fingers.

Jones tapped Bobble on the shoulder. "Bobble! I asked you what's going on down here!"

Bobble kept moaning and wringing his hands.

"Bobble!" Jones shouted. "Bob—"

Something was tugging at his trousers. Jones looked down. It was the little man in the white robe with the Van Dyke beard.

"Everything's all right now, Mr. Jones. Are you ready to go?"

Jones stared at him. There was something here he didn't understand. Why had the little man suddenly called him Jones and not—

THE crowd suddenly parted and Sergeant Ryan walked slowly

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through. Jones looked past him and saw—

A body lay crumpled and broken at the base of the dumbwaiter shaft. *His body—his body!*

"Poor Mr. Jones!" Bobble wailed to Ryan. "He shouldn't have jumped into the shaft—oh, the hotel will suffer from this! . . ."

Jones turned away dizzily. Dead. *Good Lord, he was dead!*

The little man tugged at Jones' trousers again. "We're ready to go now, Mr. Jones."

Jones stared at him dumbly. "We? . . ."

The little man pointed to the stairs. Jones looked, and stiffened.

Beverly Roland stood smiling at him, her eyes happy and glowing. Holding onto her hand was the other little man. The one in blue. The one called Peter.

"Beverly!" Jones shouted hoarsely and ran to her. "Beverly—you're all right!"

She smiled at him and took his hands in hers. "Of course, dear. I'm all right."

"But I shoved you—killed—"

The little man in white shook his head. "Oh, no, Mr. Jones. It wasn't you. That was Mr. Smith. He's beyond our help now. His judgment is over with."

"Smith?" Jones frowned. "But where did he go?"

Paul shook his head sadly. "We had to let Lucifer take him along."

"Lucifer! Lucif — *Lucy!*" Jones gasped the word out.

Peter nodded. "That's right, Mr. Jones. We've had a difficult time protecting you too. . . ."

Jones stared at the little men. Now he noticed something he had never seen before. Over their heads floated a misty ring of light, a halo of shimmering brightness.

"Then you are—" Jones began.

"That's right, Mr. Jones. We are. . . . And now will you come along with us?"

Jones felt Beverly's hand tighten in his. For a brief instant he thought of Lucy—the Lucy he had known. As he thought of her a flashing vision appeared before him. He saw a whirling chasm, a storming vortex of flame and agony. He heard a raucous laughter screeching up the chasm and along with it a shrieking wail of fear and torment. He recognized the voice. It was Badger Smith shrieking. Then it was gone.

A shudder swept through Jones, and then Peter had him by the hand. The shudder passed. A quiescent happiness glowed through his body. He smiled at Beverly and squeezed her hand in his.

"We can go now, Peter," the little man in white said.

"Yes, Paul, we have much to do yet."

Jones wasn't surprised when the building faded abruptly away and they walked out into—

THE END

BURIAL FASHIONS—400 B.C.

★ By JON BARRY ★

IN EGYPT in about 400 B.C. whenever a household lost in death one of their members, all the men and women of the family plastered their heads and faces with mud. They would leave the corpse in the house and go all about the city wailing and beating themselves. The women would have their garments bound up by a girdle and have their breasts exposed. After they had done this for some time, they would take the body to the embalmers. The embalmers would show samples of their work to the family. They had painted wooden images of corpses. There were

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three ways of embalming, each less expensive than the other. After the method and price had been agreed upon, the mourners would leave, and the craftsmen would go to work.

This was the most expensive method: First the brains were drawn out through the nostrils with a crooked iron tool. Then with a sharp stone of Ethiopia, they made a long cut along the side and took out the contents of the belly. Then they rinsed the cavity with palm wine and again with spices pounded up. Next they filled the cavity with pure myrrh and cassia and many other spices except frankincense, and sewed it up again. In this condition they kept the body covered up tight in a natron for seventy days. When the time was up, they washed the corpse and wrapped it in strips of linen smeared with gum. Then the relatives would come for it, and have a wooden figure made the same shape as the corpse, and enclose it within. Then they would stand it up against the wall in their sepulchral chamber.

The second and less expensive way to prepare a corpse was as follows: Using a syringe, they filled the belly of the corpse with cedar-wood oil without first removing the contents. They kept it in this manner for seventy days. On the last day they let the cedar oil come out, and it had such power that it brought out with it the interior organs of the body, dissolved. There was nothing left but the skin and bones. In this condition the body was given back to the relatives.

The third and least costly method seemed least repulsive. They cleansed the body with a purge and kept it for embalming seventy days and then gave it back to the family.

The bodies of wives of high ranking officials and also of beautiful women, were not taken immediately to the embalmers. They waited till the fourth day after death so that the embalmers would not wish to abuse their women.

"BLOODY" SIR RICHARD

By CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT

SIR RICHARD BAKER was buried in Cranbrook Church, Kent, England, with his red, bloody gloves hanging over his tomb. The Baker family had formerly owned a great deal of property in Cranbrook, but during the reign of Edward VI, by extravagance and philandering they gradually lost everything except an old house in the village which was later used as a poorhouse. Sir Richard Baker was the only remaining representative of the family when Queen Mary came to the throne. He had spent several years on the continent after winning unfairly in a duel, but he thought it would be safe to return with Mary on the throne. So he brought one servant with him from the continent, and they lived all alone in this old house that had been a poorhouse.

Before long, weird stories began to circulate about blood-curdling shrieks that had been heard to come from the old house at night. Wealthy people reported that they had been robbed in the woods nearby, and many unfortunate travelers, mostly young women, were missed and never heard from again. Richard Baker continued to live in seclusion, but somehow managed to buy back all his property, although he was known to have been penniless when he returned to England.

Apparently he became attached to a certain young lady in the neighborhood, who was known for always wearing a wealth of jewels. He often urged her to come and visit him at his old house, telling her that he had many interesting things there to show her. She always declined graciously. But one day she was walking near the house with a woman companion, when she decided she would like to call on him. So they knocked at the door, but there was no answer. The door was unlocked, so they walked in. At the head of the stairs was a parrot which screamed at them, "Pretty lady, be not so bold, or your red blood will soon run cold." And I presume their blood did run cold when they opened the door of a room and found it filled with bodies of murdered persons, mostly women. Just then they heard a sound outside, and looked out the window to see Bloody Baker and his servant returning to the house with the body of another victim. Naturally the ladies practically died with fear, but managed to hide themselves under the stairs. As the murderers went past them with their unfortunate victim, one of her hands got caught in the bannister. With an oath, Bloody Baker pulled out his knife and cut the hand off. It fell right into the lap of one of the ladies hiding under the stairs. As soon as the murderers were up stairs, the ladies ran out of the house, taking with them the dead hand. On one of the fingers was a beautiful ring. When they arrived home they told their story and produced the ring as proof. Some of their friends recognized the ring as one belonging to an acquaintance. All the relatives had lost friends mysteriously, so they planned a trap for the murderer. They planned to invite Bloody Baker to a large party, apparently in a friendly manner. Police officers were out of sight but ready. When Baker arrived, the young lady told all that she had seen. Baker insisted that she had just had a bad nightmare. When she pulled out the hand with the ring on it, Baker could think of nothing to say. The officers took him away and he was later burned at the stake.

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Sheila and Rick stared in horror as the giant puffballs swayed closer, closer . . .

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The MAD SCIENTIST

by ROBERT BLOCH

Professor Lippert's puffballs were made for one purpose—to kill.

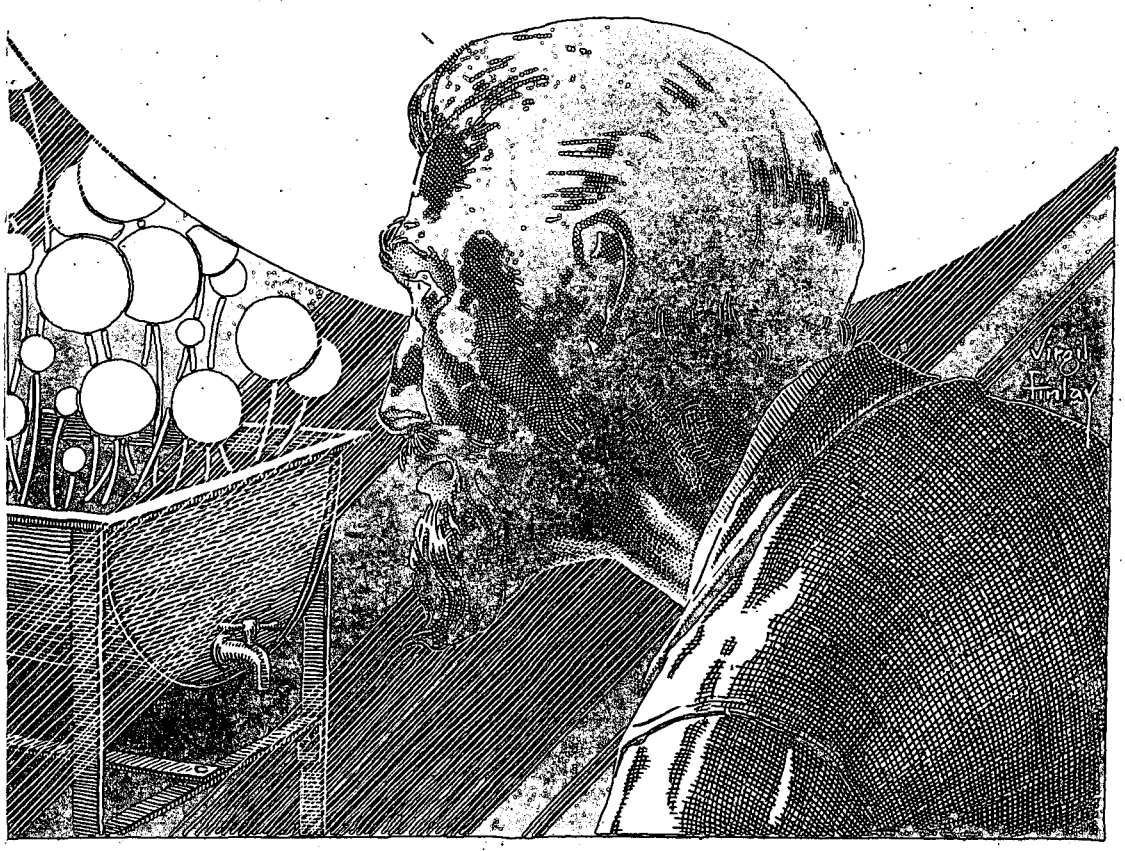
"THE hell you say!" snorted Rick Hanson.

"No." Professor Lippert raised a pudgy hand in protest. "That isn't what I said at all. I said that the writer of science-fiction is the world's most potentially dangerous type."

Rick Hanson's eyebrows formed a sardonic hirsute arch.

"You giving me the needles?" he asked. "Just because I write science-fiction, does that mean I'm not human?"

"Probably." Lippert shook his leonine head until the grey curls dropped over his forehead. "The reactions of a science-fiction writer are not human, in the psychiatrically normal sense of



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the word."

Rick Hanson poured another drink. It seemed to help. "All right, pal," he drawled. "Let's you and me have a good old drunken and profound discussion about science-fiction writers, huh? Then I'll remember all the good cracks and stuff 'em into my next yarn. You're the Professor—go ahead and get brilliant on me."

Lippert's buddha-like bulk shook with suppressed mirth. "I mean it," he protested. "Men like you are dangerous."

"Lean and hungry, eh?"

Lippert smiled ruefully. "Don't rub it in. I've aged a lot in ten years and you look as fit as ever. But stick to the point. I'm still talking about you as a science-fiction writer."

"And I'm not a human being."

"Right. Not an adult one. Look at it this way. The science-fiction writer is dangerous because his mind knows no barriers. His imagination is not curbed by any normal rules."

Rick Hanson sat up, suddenly interested. "Rave on," he urged.

"Look at it this way. Most children grow up and learn to curb the extravagances of their imaginations. So-called 'imaginative' adults manage to confine their fantasies to recognized art forms or prescribed culture patterns. Even when fantasy is translated into anti-social behavior, it generally follows accepted psychotic lines.

"But the science-fiction writer is an exception to all these rules. He's a grownup with a child's imagination. He's an opium-smoker with a perpetual supply of opium, and no recognizable stigma or deterrant physical decay to hamper him. He's a super Jack the Ripper with a wide background of knowledge. What in others is regarded as juvenile daydreaming, or hasheesh visions, or sadistic mania is merely the accepted stock-in-trade of the average science-fictioneer.

"Now do you get what I'm driving at? You and your kind are the only ones on earth who can, with perfect safety, indulge in perpetual flight from reality—of the most dangerous sort. You brood on destroying the world, the universe. You hatch fiendish plots. plan gruesome crimes. You create weird monstrosities, actuated by no human emotion or purpose. You cultivate your abnormality as a matter of course, seek to justify the aberrations in your stories—and worse than that, attempt to develop a *modus operandi* for your death-rays and blastors and disintegrators."

RICK HANSON raised both hands above his head and grinned. "All right, pal—you got me. I admit I'm nuts. I buried the body under the cellar floor. You'll find the head in the furnace."

"Many a true word spoken in jest." Lippert leaned forward, without returning the grin in kind. "I'm glad the army is taking your kind into G.I. units. Better to have your imaginations working for authority than against it.

"But I'm just afraid that when the barricades are built, science-fiction writers will stand on them in the van—armed with deadly weapons of their own creation. Science-fiction writers, if they ever awaken, will stop writing horrible fiction and start making history. Horrible history."

Rick still grinned, but he wasn't listening. He was studying Lippert, in disappointment.

His old school friend wasn't a good professor at all. He was too fat for the part. His pudgy face was too benign. He had no charming eccentricities. He didn't seem to be fanatical. His language was too commonplace, his

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word-choices too non-technical. And he didn't marshall his arguments with the scholarly logic Rick would employ if he were writing him into a story.

Rick the fantasy-writer examined Professor Lippert and discarded him. No possibilities here.

And then, Sheila walked into the room.

Sheila was something different.

Sheila was young, slim, an angel with a halo of copper hair.

Her eyes sparkled—either in appreciation of her husband's argument, or in admiration of Rick.

Yes, Sheila was definitely in character. Just the type for a heroine. The old Professor's girl-wife in one of those triangle plots.

Rick lost no time in mentally casting himself in the hero's role. Lippert, of course, would be getting the short end of the triangle.

"And another thing." Rick heard the words and realized, with a jolt, that Professor Lippert was still hammering away with his heavy-handed humor.

"And another thing—I've got a personal score to settle with you science-fiction writers. Look what you do to professors like myself in your yarns! According to you, we're all a bunch of crackpots. Either we're elderly eccentrics with a lot of absent-minded mannerism or we're mad scientists. Do I look like a mad scientist? I'll leave it to Sheila to decide."

The girl in the doorway stepped forward and put her arms around Lippert's neck. Rick watched the play of her slim fingers, wondered if they would be warm to the touch or cool and soothing. Rick looked at her sensual mouth as it curved in a smile. No question there—that mouth would be hot. Hot, and clinging.

The words evoked other images in Rick's brain, but he maintained a sardonic smile. Sheila spoke.

"Of course you're not a mad scientist, darling," she giggled. "Except when you lose a collar-button or something."

HER eyes met Rick's. "On the other hand, I've been listening to your little discussion, and I'm inclined to agree wiith you about science-fiction writers. They *are* dangerous, I'm sure."

She didn't sound very afraid to Rick, and what he read in her eyes was not fear, but a challenge.

"Why would I be dangerous?" Rick asked, calmly. "After all, Lippert and I are good friends. We went to school together ten years ago. He drifted into this and I went into writing. But I think our interests are still similar. I know him and he knows me. Where's the danger?"

"Plagiarism."

"What do you mean?"

"I know you writers," Sheila laughed. "I'm willing to bet you'll try to steal my husband's ideas for your stories."

Rick, gazing at her, knew very well that if he wanted to steal anything of her husband's, it wouldn't be his ideas. But he remained bland.

"Wasn't aware he had any ideas," he said, pitching his voice to mock sarcasm.

"Darling!" Sheila stared at Professor Lippert. "Don't tell me you've been talking to Rick all this time and haven't even mentioned your hydroponics?"

"His *what?*"

"His hydroponics! You know—water gardening. He's gone positively dizzy over it. We have the whole lab. rigged up with the apparatus. Usually all he does is buttonhole visitors about his hobby. Perhaps he had a hunch himself that you'd steal his theories."

"Quit kidding, my dear." Lippert

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rose from the chair. "I'm not worried about Rick, here. Hydroponics is a definite science. And there's no science in Rick's yarns. Matter of fact, I doubt if he'd understand my work."

Rick took the ribbing in good grace, returned smile for smile.

"Now I'm interested," he said. "What's with your hydro-whatever-it-is?"

"You see?" Lippert smirked triumphantly. "Told you he doesn't have any real background. Doesn't even know what hydroponics might be."

"Of course, I've got a few hunches." Rick stared at Sheila and forced an elaborately casual tone of voice as he drawled on.

"I imagine you are referring to what is known as chemiculture, or water-culture of plant life. This method of growth employs a large tank of metal, wood, glass or concrete—the material does not matter if the tank is watertight. The tank is generally covered with a perforated plate holding a foot or more of sawdust, shavings, excelsior, or peat moss. Above this layer is a rack or frame trellis arrangement to guide the growth of the plant organisms.

"The tank is filled with water, properly aerated by a syringe or pressure pump, and the water contains chemicals and salts of elements, placed there in correct proportions to insure the growth of the seeds used.

"Among common ingredients are auxin, the plant growth hormone; boron, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, nitrogen, sulphur—and other forms of nitrates, sulphates and phosphates, depending on the formula required for the growth of a particular variety of plant.

"The seeds are placed in the shavings on the rack above the tank. Roots, naturally, grow down until they are suspended in the liquid from which they derive nourishment. Growth occurs due to a process of capillary attraction.

"Experiments have been made with electricity, with ultra-violet and infra-red rays. Budding and grafting are accepted techniques in the process, and by employing high temperatures and extra chemicals, a number of amazing hybrids and monstrosities can be produced at will.

"But generally, hydroponics merely accelerates speed of growth, size of the plant organism, and stimulates profusion."

Rick stopped and made a mocking bow. "I rest my case," he murmured.

LIPPERT'S mouth formed an astonished oval. Sheila brushed coppery curls from her forehead and giggled.

"I guess he told you that time, honey," she said.

Professor Lippert simulated despair. "After such a lecture, a visit to the laboratory is mere redundancy," he told Rick.

"Like to see it anyway."

"Come on, then." Lippert bustled ahead in a fatherly fashion as Rick and Sheila brought up the rear. At least Rick thought of Lippert's movements as "fatherly." He wondered if the same idea wasn't shared by the girl. Surely, after comparing her husband with himself, she couldn't help but see that Lippert was getting to be an old man. And—

Abruptly, Rick forced the notion away. Lippert was carrying on a running tirade as they moved down the hall towards the laboratory door.

"—must admit you fooled me completely. Never knew you had to have an actual scientific basis of knowledge for those nightmares you dream up. Of

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course, while you've given the rudimentary explanation of hydroponics, you haven't even touched the theoretical aspect — the really significant points.

"Do you realize what hydroponics will mean to the human race? Right now it's all experimental dabbling, but in a few years, with large-scale development, hydroponics will actually revolutionize our way of living. Matter of fact, it will exercise greater potentialities for change than the invention of the steam-engine."

"Who's dreaming now?" Rick asked.

"It's no dream, my lad. The essential fact hydroponics brings forth is that plant life can be controlled. Utterly controlled.

"Man has always been chained to the soil. His life pattern, his culture, his basic philosophy has been eternally earth-bound. Hydroponics brings true relief, new freedom to all humanity! Freedom from manual labor, for plants grown hydroponically require only a minimum of care. Freedom from the very laws of Nature—for plants can be grown anywhere, in any climate, all the year round. Hydroponic planting will give you bananas at the North Pole."

"And bananas at the North Pole brings the new Utopia," Rick chuckled. "I get it."

"Don't say such things," Sheila chided him. "He's such a fanatic he might cut your throat." She pressed Rick's arm as though in warning, but her slim fingers remained on his left bicep as Lippert unlocked the laboratory door.

"That's not what I mean," Lippert answered. "Can't you see the possibilities? We'll get better food, more food, cheaper food—for the whole world. Think of the social implications! No longer will four-fifths of the population be reduced to agrarian slavery. The coolie hordes of the east, the peasantry of Europe, freed at last from their earthly bondage, will be able to attain their rightful status as mature human beings. No more hunger, no more want, no more caste system!

"Think of the eugenic possibilities! A proper diet for all! Scientifically-controlled nutrition; with proper nourishment bred into the vegetables and fruit. Disease will be banished—"

"Who writes your stuff—Henry Wallace?" Rick winked at Sheila. She winked back. Rick shook his head in feigned despair. "Don't understand you, Lippert—you always talk in exclamation points and italics."

"You always talk," Lippert rejoined, shortly. "But step in and see for yourself."

They entered the laboratory proper.

PROFESSOR LIPPERT, when not engaged at the University, had made good use of his time. He had chosen to house his hobby in an actual greenhouse, converted from the left wing of the building.

Here, under a transparent roof, set against the background of glassed-in walls, stood the hydroponic equipment which constituted Lippert's botanical laboratory.

A row of tanks stood against the farther walls, each carefully segregated from its fellows. Rick noted the details; the thermometers, pressure-guages, aeration pumps, and other apparatus. He saw the charting table before each tank, littered with scribbled notes and calculations.

Over against the near wall was a huge rack filled with bottles and stoppered decanters containing liquids and powdered chemicals. The table below it was strewn with utensils for the measurement and treatment of the substances employed.

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But a single glance sufficed Rick for the moment. He stared at the plants.

Rising from the tanks in nodding rows, the bulbous heads of gigantic vegetables seemed to peer and stare through the moist heat of the glass-enclosed jungle. Flowers extended petals like the livid lips of huge Ubangis, thrust forth flaming dragon's tongues from ensanguined mouths.

Rick's imagination kindled at the sight. Giant vegetables! Monster plants! Yes, and you could create hybrids at will. Monstrosities.

Something of his thoughts seeped through his intent stare, for Lippert suddenly laughed.

"I know what you're thinking! You're looking at my cabbages and squash and wishing I had human heads growing in their place. You're wondering why I haven't tried to produce mutants and biological sports.

"You're thinking about a plot, aren't you?"

Rick nodded. "Yes," he muttered. "That's one reason I came up for a visit, you know. I wanted to get a plot from you."

He turned to Sheila. The girl stood quite close, and her arm brushed his. He tried to read her smile as Lippert chuckled beside him.

"I know just what you're thinking about, too," Lippert persisted. "What you're cooking up runs something like this.

"Typical mad scientist, interested in hydroponics, gets Venus fly trap or some invented variant of a carnivorous plant, and raises it hydroponically. Result—the plant becomes seven or eight feet tall in short order; just the right size to eat the hero alive when he comes to pay court to the scientist's daughter. In a vicious battle, during which the laboratory is wrecked, the hero feeds the mad scientist to the giant fly trap and runs off with the scientist's daughter. Right?"

Rick shrugged slowly. "Maybe," he said. "You're pretty close." Again he smiled at Sheila.

Lippert was close at that, Rick realized. It was just the plot he'd had in mind, except for one detail. He wasn't thinking about using a scientist's daughter—he was thinking of a scientist's wife.

Now, all he needed was the fly-trap.

RICK put on his slack suit and did things to his black hair. He grinned at his reflection in the mirror. The reflection grinned back.

"Not bad," he said. "Not bad at all."

The verdict covered more than his appearance. He was thinking of the way he was making time with Sheila.

She was taking him on a "picnic" this afternoon—just a little basket lunch affair on the bluff above the river outside of town.

Lippert was up at the University. Faculty meeting had been announced at the last moment, and he'd found it necessary to go. The picnic could have been postponed. But Sheila hadn't postponed it. That meant she was glad to be alone with him.

A nice romantic setting . . . a picnic in the woods . . .

"Ready?"

Sheila stuck her head in the bedroom door with an impudent toss of her curls. In her gingham play suit she looked almost like a little girl. Almost—but not quite. Rick appreciated the differences.

"Uh huh," he said. "Let's go."

They went. Rick carried the basket. Out of the house, down the side street, across a lot to the winding country road leading to the river-bank and the bluff above.

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Sheila clasped Rick's free hand as they swung along. It was an artless gesture, deliberately calculated. Both of them were playing the game now; indulging in the most minute of small talk, but losing no nuance of expression, no tactile gradation of bodily contact.

Rick's grin was a permanent fixture now. This was going to be easy—and very pleasant. A casual affair, no harm done. He'd make the proper overtures when they reached the bluff and spread their lunch. Better not use the "I love you" theme. That was much too serious a note. He'd tell her that she was attractive, instead. That he found her stimulating. Yes. That was the cue. Stimulating. An inspiration. The old line. And then—

He was still waiting for the moment as they reached the top of the bluff. Panting slightly from the climb, Rick surveyed the river stretched below. The setting was an idyllic pastoral. It might have been Grecian if the landscape had not been marred by the cluster of University buildings to the left, and the dotted dwellings comprising campus-town that lay within the shadow of the academic halls.

Rick turned his back on civilization and began to contemplate the beauties of nature. Sheila, now, bending on one dimpled knee as she spread out the table-cloth. The flaming aureole of her hair swept forward, and a curl brushed his forehead.

NOW was the time. He'd take her in his arms and make with the hearts and flowers. She'd put on the surprise act, fake a little resistance, and then everything would be rosy. Rick had it all figured out.

So he reached for her, and she closed her eyes and fell into his arms and whispered, "Darling—I love you."

Then she was kissing him, and Rick held her tight and close, and she kept whispering, "Rick, I love you so, I love you so!"

It wasn't supposed to be this way at all, but Rick didn't object. After that first kiss he had no resistance left. The second kiss removed scruples as well as resistance. And the third kiss did things to his sanity, so that Rick found himself murmuring, "I love you too—Sheila, darling—"

The dialogue was definitely corny. But somehow, it seemed to carry conviction.

And there was so much to talk about, so much to confess and to confide. Sheila told him about Lippert; how he bored her, how she despised his heavy-handed pleasantries, his pedantic mannerisms, his middle-aged romanticism.

Rick, in return, told her that her hair was a splintered shaft of sunlight, her eyes twin glimpses of a dream, her lips a fountain of eternity. He hoped he'd remember some of the stuff to write down later. But at the moment he was quite content.

He readily agreed that Lippert was a bore, and that he, Rick, was wonderful. In all modesty he admitted that Sheila's opinion of his charm and talent was wholly justified by the facts.

"I feel as though I've always known you," the girl sighed, nestling in his arms. "I've read your stories ever since I can remember. I always wanted to meet you. I knew you'd be like this—clever, and whimsical, and—"

Rick was momentarily irritated when she hesitated. He could have thought of a dozen descriptive words to add.

But irritation faded. Sheila was murmuring on.

"Take me away with you, darling," she pleaded. "Let's get out of here, now."

It was just the type of thing Rick

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had meant to avoid. No scenes, no dramatics, no rash moves of any kind. And yet—she loved him. And she was a gorgeous armful. Rick hesitated a moment.

"But what about Lippert?"

"He has his work. He doesn't care about me, I swear it! He buries himself in that laboratory of his, with those awful plants. I've tried to understand, but it's no use. Don't you see, Rick? I'm young, I'm like you, I want fun and excitement and—"

It was strictly soap-opera, but Rick ate it up. And loved every word of it.

A momentary flash of common-sense intruded.

"Let's try to think this thing out, darling," said Rick. He sat up and watched Sheila pin up her hair.

"It's all very well to talk about running away and starting a new life. But this isn't the second act of a play. We don't want to start a lot of fuss and unpleasant scandal. Whatever we do, we'll do quietly and sensibly, after planning it out. After all, I'm staying here through the end of the week."

"End of the week? That reminds me." Sheila became abruptly practical. "We're throwing a party for you Saturday evening, you know."

"Party? I didn't know."

"His friends. From the faculty, of course. And their foolish wives. It'll be an awful bore, but we'd planned it before you came. Now we'll have to go through with it, so he won't suspect anything."

Rick helped himself to a hardboiled egg and balanced it delicately on two fingers. When he spoke his voice was low.

"Uh—what do you think he'd do if he—suspected?"

"Darling, don't worry. He's never been the suspicious type, or jealous either. We could be kissing right under his nose and he'd still putter around in that lab of his. But what are we talking about? He isn't going to suspect. The trouble with you is you're thinking of what would happen if you were writing one of your stories. It's just the way you look at things. He was right, you know. You'd picture him as one of those mad scientists. He isn't at all mad—just dull.

"Well, what are you waiting for?"

THERE was only one answer to this last question. As Sheila extended her arms, Rick forgot about the hardboiled egg and went into love's old sweet song.

It was some time later that they became aware of the gathering twilight.

"We'll be late," Sheila whispered. "Darling, from now on we must be careful. We'll have to decide what we're going to do, and meanwhile he can't be allowed to see that anything is wrong. Let's think of an excuse for staying out here all this time."

"Shall we gather some flowers?" Rick suggested.

"No—wait! I've got a better idea. Let's pick some of these mushrooms for dinner."

The girl indicated a nearby cluster of mushrooms, interspersed with puffballs, fringing the border of the bluff beneath the trees.

Rick glanced at the large redtopped growths and shook his head.

"For a scientist's wife and a science-fiction writer's sweetheart you aren't very well educated," he chuckled. "If we gather these for dinner he certainly will suspect. You see, honey, these mushrooms are poisonous."

"How do you know?"

"Simple botany. Note the reddish tops. *Aminita muscaria*. Most deadly of them all. The poison works peculiar-

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ly, destroying the red corpuscles. In a word, it turns your blood to water. Death results in a few days after horrible suffering. There is no antidote."

Sheila shivered. Then she giggled. "Maybe we'd better pick some anyway."

Rick stared at her, hard. "That's not the way," he murmured. "That's not the way."

But as they picked up the lunch basket and descended the slope of the bluff, Rick glanced back. The round, bloated mushroom tops nodded like tiny heads as though in agreement with his secret thoughts . . .

"GOT your plot yet?"

Professor Lippert glanced up absently from his lab table as he decanted a calcium solution.

Rick shrugged. "I don't know," he confessed. "I think I'm on the right track."

"Going to do a yarn about hydroponics?" asked Lippert. "Want any special information?"

"Why?"

"Just asked. I'm expanding, you know."

"Expanding?"

Lippert swung around on his stool. "Yes. The tanks out here are all filled. I'm putting two new ones in the cellar. Going to try something with puffballs. Be glad to explain my methods as I go along if it will help you to formulate a few ideas."

Rick shook his head. "I'm not going to write about hydroponics," he declared.

"Well, I don't know where else you'll find any inspiration around here. I admit I've been too busy to see much of you these past two days, and I'm sure Sheila's company is pretty boring. Tells me she's giving a party Saturday. Well, you might find a few quaint character types in that assemblage. Or have you taken up my suggestion about the mad scientist?"

Lippert chuckled g e n i a l l y and slapped Rick on the back. "Cheer up," he said. "I think I know what's troubling you."

Rick blinked. "What do you mean?"

Lippert's voice was soft. Sheila. She's making a play for you, isn't she, boy?"

"Why—you—I—"

"Don't bother!" Again the chuckle, a bit self-conscious this time. "I'm not blind, you know. And after being married to the woman for five years, I ought to know something about her. You aren't the first victim, by any means. She's bored. Doesn't seem very interested in my work, or in me, for that matter. So she plays around. I hope you haven't taken her seriously."

Rick thought it best to do a little chuckling himself. Inner tumult was stilled as he met Lippert's level gaze.

"Matter of fact, that's what I meant when I said I was getting an idea for a story. Sheila would make a great character; don't you think so?"

"Perhaps. Though what you want to write about a spoiled, selfish woman for I don't know. And where's your plot? If I were a jealous husband, now—"

"That would help." Rick smiled. "That, and a scientific angle of some sort. But we'll work it out, somehow."

"Yes." Lippert turned to his decanting once more. "Better run along and study your source-material now, Rick. I've got work to do."

"Maybe you're making a mistake," Rick said, softly. "Maybe you ought to be applying your efforts to another field."

"Meaning what?" The pudgy Professor wheeled around on his lab stool.

"Sheila isn't the only character I've studied. I've been watching you.

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Don't you think that if you devoted more time to her, developed common interests—"

"Quite the match-maker, aren't you?" Lippert sighed. "It's no use, Rick. She and I are worlds apart."

Now was the time. Rick took a deep breath. He hoped desperately that he'd put it over. He had to. He opened his mouth.

"Then why don't you divorce her?" he asked, striving to keep his voice pitched low. "If she's what you say she is, there isn't much hope of salvaging anything from your marriage. You're both intelligent people. Why not lead your own lives without restrictions? You can work without worrying and she can—well, she can find the companionship she needs."

Lippert frowned.

"Quit talking like a writer," he said. "This isn't some cheap love-story plot you're working out. It happens that I don't want to divorce Sheila. I need her to manage the house, take care of social duties here at the University."

HIS frown deepened incongruously as a curious smile creased his lips. "Besides, it amuses me to watch her squirm," he confessed. "I find it relaxing to contemplate her little deceptions. You might just as well forget your sociological impulses, Rick. I'll never divorce Sheila."

"Suit yourself, pal," Rick shrugged. "Merely a suggestion."

Rick left the laboratory. Once outside, inward tumult seethed upwards in boiling rage.

He had thought he was so clever in handling this affair. But Lippert had known all along! He had known, and laughed about it—laughed at him!

And Sheila was probably laughing, too. This wasn't the first time, Lippert said. And he had come along, actually fallen hook line and sinker for that "take me away from it all" line of hers.

Angrily, Rick strode into the living room. Sheila looked up from the davenport as he entered and put down a notebook.

"Darling—what's the matter?" she whispered.

Rick began to tell her, in no uncertain terms.

Then Sheila cried. She cried, wringing her hands like a hurt and pitiful child. Great sobs racked and shook her girl-body.

"The beast!" she sobbed. "And you—believed him! Rick, how could you? I love you—you're the only one I've ever told that to—look at me, Rick—look at me—"

So of course Rick looked at her and of course he took her in his arms and of course the first caress of consolation became an embrace of glowing ardor.

"Let him come in," Sheila murmured. "Let him see us, if he likes. I don't care, as long as you're here. Oh, darling—"

Caution conquered and Rick released the girl as the maid's footsteps sounded in the outer hall.

They were sitting there primly when the maid entered. Rick was lighting a cigarette and Sheila studied the list on her lap.

"Did you finish with the list, m'am?" asked the maid. I'm to order the things for the party this afternoon."

"It's all done, except for the liquor," Sheila said. "I'm running into town to buy that myself. Shaw's is the only place where you can still get gin, and Professor Lippert won't touch anything but a Tom Collins."

SHE turned to Rick with a covert smile. "Want to come along?" she asked.

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Rick shook his head. "No, I don't think so. I'm going to take a walk. Want to work out my plot. Yes, that's it."

He left the room.

It always happened that way with Rick. A story would take weeks to jell. All the elements had to be arranged subconsciously. And then a single chance word or phrase would resolve the situation and a plot would seemingly spring fullblown into being.

Now, after just three days, it had happened again. Everything had whirled around. The Professor's ribbing about the scientist and his daughter and the hero. The scene on the bluff. Lippert's sly admission of his wife's infidelities. And Rick's own picture of himself and Sheila as hero and heroine, with Lippert as the villain who must be removed. Then there was that insidious suggestion of Sheila's about the mushrooms. He had tried to reject the thought, but after Lippert's mocking he knew what he must do. The great question was—how to do it and get away with it?

Then Sheila had supplied the word necessary to complete the plot. The word and the phrase.

It echoed now, as Rick toiled up the slope towards the bluff.

"Gin," was the word. The phrase —"Professor Lippert won't touch anything but a Tom Collins."

The *aminita muscaria,* most deadly of them all. The poison works peculiarly, destroying the red corpuscles. Turns the blood to water. Death results in a few days, after horrible suffering. There is no antidote.

And the poison is . . . *undetectable.*

You pick the mushrooms and macerate them, decant the poison and place it in a Tom Collins.

Simple. Undetectable.

Rick smiled as he neared the bloated cluster against the edge of the bluff.

You pick the mushrooms . . .

WHERE do you macerate the mushrooms? Where do you decant the poison?

Not in the greenhouse laboratory. Anybody might walk in. You must choose a more deserted part of the house, take the chosen bottle of gin along, and make certain that it reaches your intended victim only. Rick had the latter move figured out. He'd hide the bottle, sneak out to the kitchen during the party on Saturday, and mix a special drink for Lippert. If Lippert was ill immediately, the crowd would blame it on over-indulgence.

But this business of macerating the mushrooms, now . . .

He thought about it all the way back to the house, while his bulging jacket-pockets brushed his thighs.

Then, as it always did, inspiration came suddenly as he remembered another phrase.

Lippert had told him he was putting two extra tanks in the cellar. If he had, there would be laboratory apparatus down there, along with the chemicals. He could macerate the mushrooms, decant, fill his bottle, and return undetected. It was unlikely that anyone would look for him in the basement.

Rick hastened into the house. The maid was in the kitchen. Sheila had just returned, left her gin on the hall table, and was upstairs taking a bath. Rick heard the water being drawn. A glance down the hall showed that Lippert was still in his greenhouse lab.

Rick made for the cellar stairs. He groped along a hall, found a light. A large room to the left proved to be the improvised hydroponics laboratory. Rick stared through a glassed-in slit set high in the oak door and saw the

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empty tanks. There was another lab table with a stock of chemicals and utensils.

He entered hastily, turned on the light. He began to dump the mushrooms from his pockets and hunted around for the necessary apparatus.

Then—almost as if on cue—footsteps sounded on the stairs above. Rick heard the ponderous tread, recognized it.

There was no time to cram the mushrooms back into his jacket-pockets. He could only sweep them under the table. Rick kicked an unopened box of bottles into place, hiding the red-topped mushrooms, just as Lippert entered the chamber.

"So you're taking a look at my new lab after all," Lippert said. "Like it?"

"I don't know. After all, you haven't started to work here yet."

"Well, I ought to be able to show you something in a couple of days," Lippert answered. "I'm going to start experiments tonight. You'll notice this room is heavily insulated. I can control the heat better. Have a separate heating unit—want to get it up to a constant of eighty in here. Ought to work well with some new solutions I've got in mind. You see, I'm taking your advice. Going to dabble with hybrids a bit." Professor Lippert glanced at his watch. "Say, it's nearly dinner time. Let's get going."

He ushered Rick from the room. Rick bit his lip as the Professor stooped and inserted a key in the door. It locked with a sharp click.

BUT there was nothing to do but put a brave face on the matter and go upstairs with the man he meant to kill, eat dinner with his future widow, and chat merrily of other things.

Lippert didn't seem to notice. But Sheila was oddly silent during dinner. Did she suspect? How could she?

"Must leave you two," the Professor announced, pushing his coffee-cup away. "Going to get started tonight. I imagine you can find something to occupy your time."

The hidden leer in his eyes made Rick wince.

But he had no time to muse. For Sheila held his arm and dragged him out on the porch.

"Rick," she said. "This afternoon—I did something."

"What do you mean?"

"Come here."

She pulled him to the edge of the porch, stooped down and brushed aside a pile of leaves in the shrubbery.

Rick stared down at a handful of red-topped mushrooms. Then he looked at Sheila. After that there was nothing more to say.

ANY interruption in the act of creation is torment for the writer. Rick found the next few days to be nightmares. For the perfect plot was hung suspended in midair. His act of creation—act of destruction, rather—was incomplete.

Here it was, Friday evening, and he hadn't been able to get downstairs to the cellar. In the mornings the door was locked. Afternoons and evenings, Lippert worked down there in the new lab.

Rick was in an agony of suspense. Had Lippert found the mushrooms? Apparently not. And even if he had, he'd never reconstruct Rick's plans.

Luckily, he had thrown Sheila's mushrooms away. Lippert didn't suspect anything, and that was well.

But the other problem, the real problem, still remained to torture Rick. How to get into the downstairs lab, make the poison and mix it with the gin—

He tried everything. He talked to

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Sheila. Couldn't she fake an excuse to make Lippert go into town? Couldn't a call come from the University? Couldn't she become ill, force him to go for a doctor?

"It won't work, darling," she sighed. "He's arranged for complete freedom the rest of this week. He's working on this new project, and he'll work right through until the cocktail party tomorrow afternoon."

As Rick paced up and down on the sun porch Friday evening he felt as though he had reached the breaking point.

It had all gone so smoothly up to now. The perfect crime, the perfect setting, and now he was helpless to bring his plot to a logical conclusion. He must depend on that which all writers refuse to consider as a plot element —coincidence.

A wry smile twisted his lips as he remembered Lippert's description of science-fiction writers.

The world's most dangerous individuals, eh?

How smugly the fat Professor had pulled that one off! And here he was, balked by the man's plodding, persistent devotion to a stolid study of hydroponics.

Rick muttered curses, then halted as Sheila joined him.

The girl was pale, shaken.

"Have you found a way?" she whispered. "Tell me, Rick—I can't stand the suspense much longer. You don't know what it means to me now just to see him, feel him near me. That fat, stupid face of his—the way he bumbles around—I'll kill him myself unless we —"

Rick held her close as the tears came.

"Hang on," he whispered.

"I know. But when I think of how an idiot like him can stand between us —not because he's clever, but because he's so stupid—I can't bear it."

"Hold it," Rick muttered. "Here he comes."

Lippert's heavy tread announced his approach. But tonight the tread was not so heavy. The bulky body moved rapidly across the parlor, reached the porch entry.

"Here you are."

THE Professor yawned, then smiled. "Excuse me. I've been at it too long, I guess."

"Through for the night?" Rick nudged Sheila sharply as he spoke. She caught her cue.

"You do look tired, darling. Why don't you run up and turn in? We've got the party to face tomorrow."

"I will, in a minute." Lippert lit a cigarette, extended the pack to Rick. "Wait until I calm down, though. Rick, I've got to apologize to you."

"What for?"

"The way I've neglected you these past three days. A fine visit, I must say—you come up to see me and I bury myself down in the basement. But I think it's been worth it."

"Got something, eh?"

Lippert nodded. "Yes. I think I really have. I'm going make an announcement tomorrow at the party, I believe. Some of the men from the University will be interested. My work has taken a remarkably productive turn."

"Just what is it you've been up to?"

Lippert shrugged. "It's a secret. Tell you tomorrow."

Rick had a flash of inspiration. "Now wait a minute, pal," he said. "After all, you just admitted you felt like a heel for neglecting me all week. The least you can do to make amends is to show me what you've done."

"You really want to see it?"

"Of course. In fact, I insist."

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"All right, come on then."

Lippert turned and walked back into the parlor. Rick hesitated on the threshold until he could whisper into Sheila's ear as he passed.

"Now's our chance. We're going downstairs. When we get in, I'll pretend to be enthusiastic about his damned plants or whatever they are. You fake an excuse to make him go upstairs for a while. Tell him to celebrate—mix us all a drink for a toast. Then you sneak out, bring a bottle of gin down before he comes. Meanwhile I'll stay and macerate the mushrooms."

"What's keeping you?" Lippert called.

"Just finishing the cigarette," Rick answered. "We're coming now."

The stairway resounded to the thumping of their feet as they descended. Rick noticed that his heart thumped curiously in rhythm.

This was it. Now, in a little while—

Lippert unlocked the door, ushered them in as he switched on the light.

"Take a look," he said.

Rick stared. The two tanks against the farther wall were empty no longer. The racks were in place, and both tanks held a greenish liquid that bubbled perceptibly.

BUT the center of attraction consisted of the objects towering from the tanks along the metal framework rising to the ceiling.

Great gossamer blobs waved slowly in midair; blobs of fantastic size.

"What are they?" Rick asked.

"Puffballs."

"But the size—"

"Mutation. And special stimulation. A new process I've devised. I'll explain it fully tomorrow. For the first time I pursued lines dear to your melodramatic heart, Rick. Used electric shock treatment and infra-red, the works. Plus a little grafting to produce a totally new variety."

Sheila twisted a damp coil from her forehead.

"It's awfully hot," she sighed.

"I know, dear. Temperature is 90 degrees or thereabouts. It makes for growth, ripens the puffballs. I wanted to do this in time for tomorrow's party."

Lippert yawned again. "Well, there it is. Now let's catch some shut-eye."

Sheila interrupted quickly.

"Wait, darling. I don't know what you've done, of course, but I'm sure it's terrifically important and scientific. Don't you think we ought to have a drink to celebrate?"

"Certainly. Come on upstairs and we'll mix a round."

"No. You mix them, darling. Rick wants to look around for a moment, I'm sure. Bring our drinks back down."

"All right."

Lippert shuffled out wearily.

As his footsteps receded down the hall, Rick galvanized into activity.

"Get that mortar and pestle out," he snapped. "I'll find the mushrooms. I hid them under the table, behind that box."

He bent down, scrabbled in the welter of boxes and racks.

He was still stooping when the lab door closed. As it banged shut he straightened up.

"Open it," he commanded. "Then run up the back steps and get me the gin."

Sheila tugged at the handle.

"It's locked," she whispered.

Rick made a move towards the door, then halted.

The little glass slit set in the panel now framed a face.

Professor Lippert was peering into the chamber from the cellar outside.

"The door is locked!" Rick called.

Lippert's voice came faintly through

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the glass.

"I know."

"Open up."

"Not just yet."

"What's the big idea? I—"

"Just wanted to give you a little more time."

"Time for what?"

"Time to find the mushrooms. Though I don't think you will, even though they're right before your eyes."

"Mushrooms? What mushrooms?" Sheila's voice cut in shrilly.

"The mushrooms your lover picked to poison me with."

FOR once the gift of improvising dialogue failed Rick. He could only stare at the face in the glass, stare into Lippert's inscrutable eyes.

"I'll save you the trouble, Rick," said Lippert. "You see, I found the mushrooms the other day. They came in very handy for my experiments. Quite so. Matter of fact, I used them in the tanks. You're looking at them now."

Man and girl gazed at the gigantic puffballs that swayed forth from the frames.

"Mushrooms and puffballs are botanically allied," Lippert called. "Of course, there were difficulties in making a fusion, but I conquered them. I had to conquer them. Because I wanted to surprise you. And you are surprised, aren't you?"

"Let me out!" Sheila broke, ran to the door, and began to pound with her fists. Lippert waited patiently until she subsided.

"In a little while, darling," he answered. "But first there is another surprise waiting for you."

"What do you mean?"

"I needn't explain about the mushrooms, Rick. You undoubtedly know the effects of *aminita muscaria* well enough and were prepared to demonstrate them on me. I believe you intended to distill a poison and then arrange for me to swallow it. Of course the result is death—hideous death. The blood dissolves in your veins, you know, and—"

"No! No—" Sheila shrieked until shrill echoes resounded through the locked chamber.

"I thought of another way. A simpler way. Suppose the mushrooms were to become puffballs? Suppose the puffballs were to burst? A single breath of the pollen, in heavily concentrated form, introduces the poison throughout the system. This is the method I selected. And you two are the subjects I have selected."

"Lippert—stop this—let us out!" Rick shouted.

"In just a moment, now. According to my calculations the puffballs are about ready to burst. After they burst I will release you within five minutes. Yes, in less than five minutes. Because by that time you will have inhaled enough to make the results quite certain. There is no antidote."

"I'll go to the police," Sheila sobbed. "You'll be hung for this."

"I doubt it, my dear. In the first place, I could tell them about your little scheme of poisoning me. In the second place, the whole thing is a horrible accident. The door swung shut, I was upstairs. Don't you see? And I was experimenting, I didn't know my hybrids were poisonous.

"But why pretend? The toxic effects will be much stronger this way. By the time I open this door the two of you will be screaming in agony. Your motor reflexes will be affected. You couldn't grasp a telephone in your lovely little hand, Sheila, and if you did so you'd tear it in half."

"Lippert, listen to me—you must listen—" Rick gasped.

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"I have listened to you. To your lies about you and Sheila. You think I didn't know? You tried to steal her from me. You plotted to kill me. But I won't die. A posturing, empty-headed writer of cheap fiction and a stupid, cheating woman will die. And I will live. Live to carry on my work, my experiments. I shall rule science with a weapon of life, a weapon of death!"

Lippert was silent.

A faint popping sound reverberated through the locked room. Rick and Sheila turned and stared at the huge puffballs. One of the blobs had burst.

Reddish clouds of pollen poured forth with an acrid scent. Rick smelled the odor of death.

It was welling up now. In a moment it would reach their nostrils.

He turned for the last time to stare at Lippert's face in the glass.

With a curious shock he recognized the meaning of the intent eyes, the fixed grin. He should have known it from the first, but he hadn't, and that was his mistake.

Staring at Lippert's face he realized that he was looking at a typically mad scientist.

CAMBODIAN DANCERS

By FRANCES YERXA

The Last Survivors of a Once Royal Profession

THE most important troupe of Cambodian dancers is in Pnom Penh and until a few years ago, was a vital part of the royal ménage. They are the only living survivals of their civilization which expired hundreds of years ago on the banks of the Tonle Sap. Recently these dancers went on strike in protest about their working conditions. Now they are no longer dancers for the palace but a state troupe performing under the direction of the protectorate. The dancers of the Pnom Penh Company were taken from all parts of the realm. A family was highly honored to have its daughter chosen to dance before the king, for they profited socially as well as financially, depending on the charm and accomplishment of the girl.

Training for the royal ballet was started with gymnastics as early as eight years, although the mothers had probably been promoting the flexibilities of their fingers and elbows since their birth. Even today in Siem Reap one sees mothers bending back the fingers of the baby girls and massaging their elbow muscles and joints in hopes that some day they will be worthy of a place in the ballet.

The royal dancers lived at the palace under the supervision of the principal wife of the king. They were considered part of the harem and were paid a bit for their acts and lived in hope that some day they might become wives of the king.

THE dance takes place in the ancient temples of the Khmers, and starts with the dramatic rising of the moon and continues for about two hours. There is a procession of little boys with torches to light the way to the temple. Tomtoms, cymbals, and flutes mix their weird notes as the costumed girls come trooping across the flagstones . . . girls with minarets on their heads and silver bracelets on their ankles. In every detail they appear to be the ladies sculptured on the walls of the temple galleries. The flame bearers take up a semicircular position around the area reserved for the dance. The weird lighting effect is achieved partly by the moon and more by the little boys playing their torches back and forth. The dancers, in their odd costuming, seem to be no larger than the carved Apsaras whose resurrection they are attempting. Their faces are dead white with rice powder and their feet glitter with silvery rings. They wear tall crowns on their bound up hair. They are dressed in long red skirts caught up in back to give them more freedom of movement. Blue jackets designate the dancers who take male roles, and those portraying princesses and queens wear a silk scarf about their breasts. Their dance is merely a series of postures, some of them pretty and some not, but all of them performed with remarkable muscular control. They march slowly through the smoke and into the light of the torches, arms extended and bodies bent backward, in a dance step closely patterned after the gait of an elephant—the slow motion of his stride and his quick shift in weight. The chief skill of the dancers is the control of the hands. Their fingers curl back from the palm till they all

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but reach the wrist, and arms in an arc explained only by supposing that they must be double-jointed in their elbows. The dancers copy in every way the postures of the girls of the Anghor basreliefs, even to being pigeon-toed. The carvers of old Anghor were very good in their picturing of the human body all except for the feet. They were never able to show a foot except in profile so they were all box-ankled or pigeon-toed, and the modern dancers are faithful to their models.

The dance has nothing seductive in it. The scenes are all from Hindu mythology portrayed by pictures instead of continuous movement. They consist of kidnapings, chaste love scenes, fights with Yeacks and bereft fathers, rescues of stolen maidens etc.

The dance comes to an end as weird as its beginning. The girls suddenly stand like statues with their arms outstretched and their fingers bent way back. The little boys leap to their feet and lift their torches high, and the flaming procession starts back through the temple and out across the moat.

HELL CAT ISLAND

By H. R. STANTON

Where Man Lost Control of His Household Pets

HELL CAT ISLAND has no official name, is unowned by any nation and has no inhabitants. It is within easy sailing distance of Tahiti, and you can have the whole island if you want it. But first you'll have to figure out some way to do away with the dangerous man-eating cats that have made it a good place to stay away from for sixty-nine years.

Hell Cat Island has a very strange history. It was a rough day in 1862 when trouble first came to the island. Two old trading schooners cracked up on the coral reefs and the sailors swam ashore, but so did hundreds of starving ship rats. A few days later the crew was picked up by a vessel from Tahiti, but of course the rats stayed. The natives waved goodbye and went back to their simple, easy living of fishing and farming the rich soil. They forgot all about the rats but the filthy rodents didn't forget them. The rats multiplied as rats do, and nibbled away on the bountiful crops. They liked this new bill-of-fare and began a devouring warfare on every edible thing. The natives were fighting a losing battle. As they struggled to protect their crops, other big, strong rats invaded the villages and went into the huts and ate small babies. Nine years later, the natives decided that they were completely outnumbered and left the island to the hordes of rats.

Andre Olan, a young French copra trader, heard the fantastic story and decided he would like to take over the island and become "King" of his South Sea empire. So he filled the hold of his ship with five hundred cats and set sail for his kingdom. When he dropped anchor in the cove and turned the half-starved cats loose, he wasn't prepared to see the terrible massacre that was in store for the rats. By this time they had eaten nearly everything on the island and rushed down to the sea to attack the equally hungry cats. It was a bloody mess but the cats won and only a few rats escaped inland.

Andre Olan, feeling very clever for his act, sailed to a nearby island to buy supplies and get men to build the copra station he planned to have on his newly acquired island. When he came back in a few weeks, he found the cats nice and sleek and satisfied. There was not a rat in sight. So Olan built himself a nice home and a copra shed and settled down in his little kingdom in the sea. Everything went fine for a while till the cats, which had multiplied as cats always do, had hunted down the last rat and began making raids on the stores of meat and fish. Olan didn't mind because he was still so grateful to the cats, so he ordered the men to go out and catch fish for them. This was a wonderful life for the cats. All they did was lay around in the sun till mealtime, like wealthy Palm Beach vacationers. But the cats continued to multiply so fast that the men couldn't keep the supply of fish up to the demand. The cats were again hungry and started raiding the stores of meat. So Olan ordered them shot on sight. They were way up in the thousands by now, and they were so ferocious that the men, after being attacked many times, just tried to keep away from them.

Of course cats instinctively hate the water, but when they are faced with starvation they will do most anything, so these cats became fishercats. They not only learned how to scoop fish up out of the water with their paws, but they became experts at swimming and diving for them. Olan realized he had let the cats get too far and they were out of his control. After there had been so many attacks on his men, he finally abandoned the island to the cats and returned to Tahiti.

That was in 1881 and of course since then the cats have still been breeding. There are so many today that boats in those waters do not dare go near the island for fear of being attacked.

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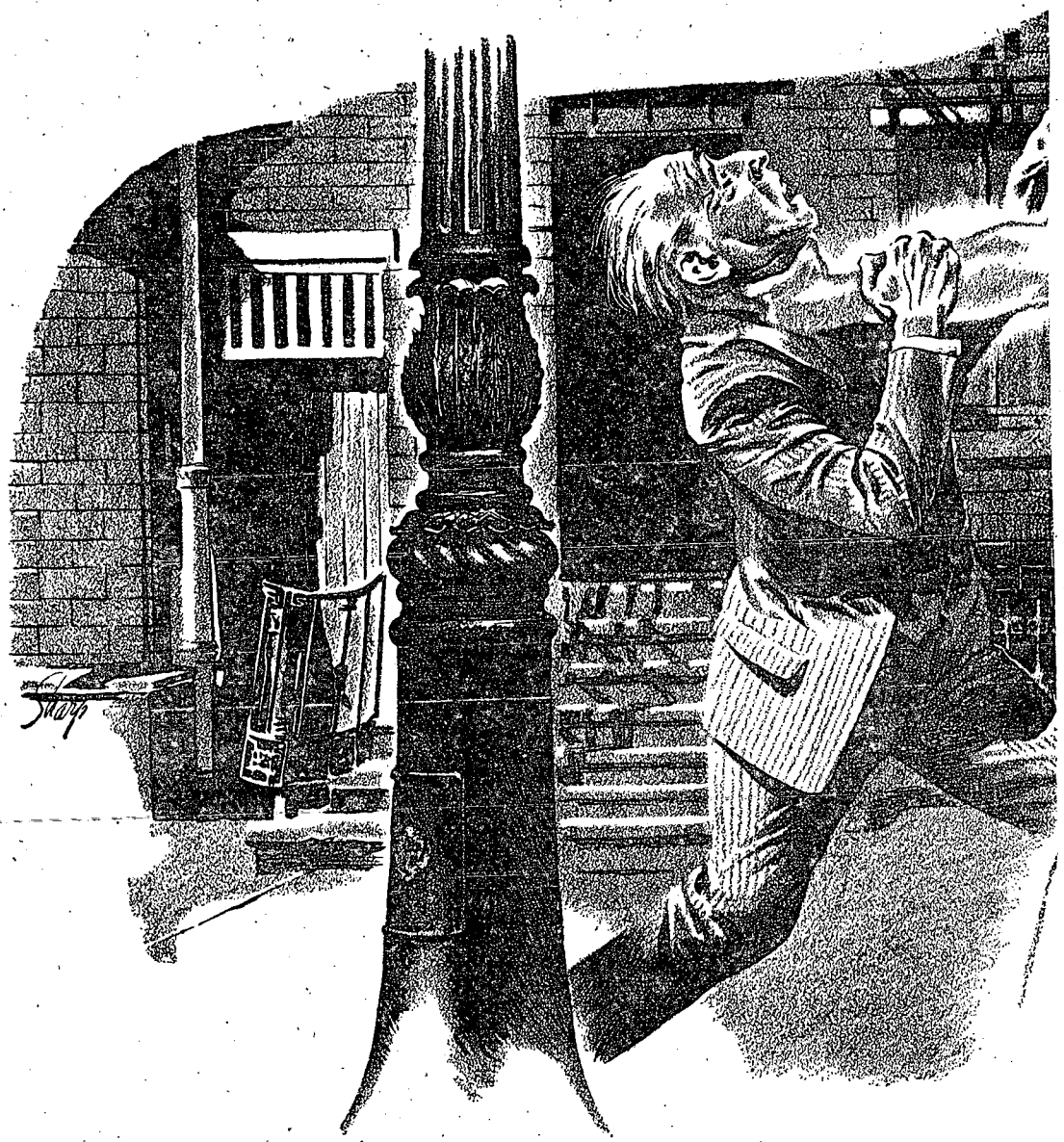
ONCE TO DIE

by John and Dorothy de Courcy



Buck Harper awaited his electrocution impatiently. Unlike most men, he wanted to die. But them, he had an excellent reason.

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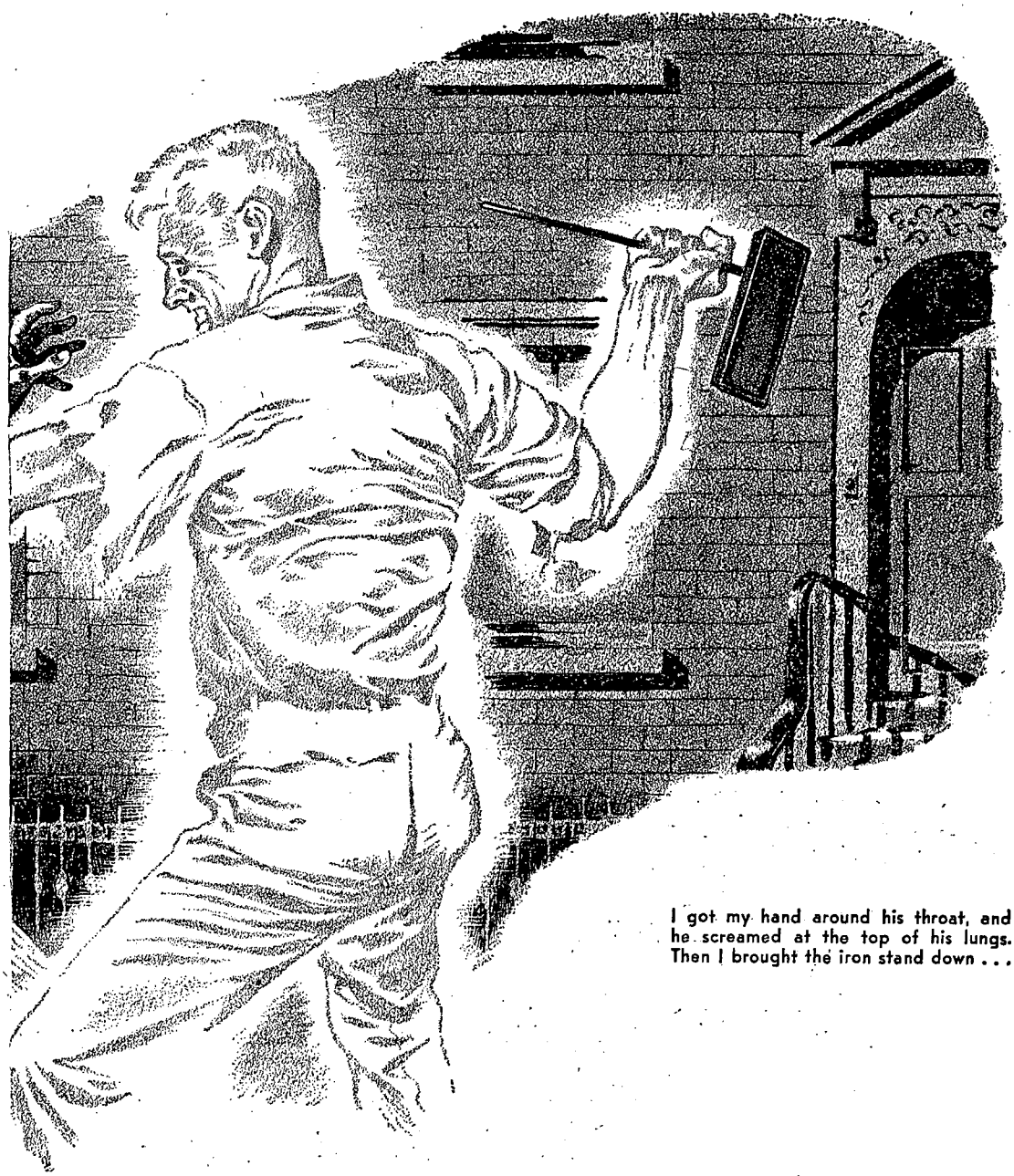

I got my hand around his throat, and he screamed at the top of his lungs. Then I brought the iron stand down . . .

I RECEIVED this manuscript from Jerry Sloan, a lawyer with whom I have a slight acquaintance. He wants me to publish this so I am sending it on without any changes. I don't want to believe this, and I urge you not to, but I haven't the right to withhold this from the public.

* * *

It's another moonlight night, a moon with a halo, and I'm afraid. It's funny that I should be afraid of anything but I am. I ain't afraid of dyin' but I have good reason to be, 'cause I'm goin' to be electrocuted at eleven thirty. No, it ain't dyin' I'm scared of, it's livin'.

I'm sorry if I sound erratic but I got to write fast. It's ten minutes before

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ten. It all started two years ago . . .

I insert a nickel in a juke box and suddenly I notice a tingling in my fingers. My hand contracts and jerks away from the machine.

"Damn thing must be shorted," I mutters.

The bartender looks at me queerly but don't say anything.

"I mean the juke box," I explain.

The bartender stares at me for a second and then comes back to earth. "Hey! What's the matter with your face?" he asks in a puzzled voice.

"Nothin' the matter with my face! What ya talkin' about?"

"You——ya—got something on it!" he stammers.

I get the idea. I had just seen my girl, Isabel so I draw out my handkerchief and walk over to the bar mirror and I stop short. There ain't any lipstick! I got a HALO! Yeah, I mean just that! A HALO!! You've seen those old pictures where saints have halos around their faces. Only it wasn't like that. This yellow glow didn't seem to be behind my face. My whole face was glowing!

I look at my hands and they have a funny glow too. It isn't very bright. In fact, if the bar hadn't been dimly lighted, it wouldn't even be noticeable. Anyway, I pay for my drink and get out of there. I thinks maybe I'm goin' to pieces and maybe I better see a doctor. I get a phone book and call two or three of 'em and finally I get one. Sure, he'll wait for me, he says. So I tear outside and grab a cab. The cabby looks at me kinda funny but he don't say anything. When we get there, I toss the cabby a five and run inside. The elevator is brightly lighted so nobody notices anything but I heave a big sigh when I finally close the door of the doctor's office behind me.

THE doc gives me a big grin and has me sit down. "Well, what seems to be troubling you?" he asks.

"Well, doc, it sounds kinda screwy but I, well——that is, I——, ah hell doc! I'll give it to ya straight! I glow in the dark!"

"You what!!" the doc asks.

"I'm givin it to ya straight!" I says.

The doc laughs. Not the funny ha-ha laugh but sort of a chuckle. "Ah, tell me Mr.———ah,—"

"Harper," I says. "Buck Harper."

"How long has this been going on?"

"It just happened tonight. I was shovin' a nickel into a juke box." The doc nods his head so I go on. "I guess the juke box must have been shorted or somethin' cause I got sort of a shock, see. Then I turn around and the bartender tells me there's somethin' wrong with my face. So I go and look in the mirror and my face is glowin'. That is, it's givin' out light like a lamp globe!"

The doc gives me a funny grin when I stop. "Tell me, Mr. Harper, what do you do for a living?"

"I hold down a table at Sad Sam's." The doc draws a blank on this one so I try again. "I mean, I take care of a dice table."

The doc puts his fingers together and nods his head as if he knows what it's all about. Then he has me take off my clothes and he gives me the works. Finally, when I'm all dressed again he says, "Mr. Harper, I can't find anything functionally wrong. I'm afraid you are the victim of an optical illusion."

"What do ya mean, illusion?" I asks.

"I mean, you saw something that wasn't actually there. A trick of the lighting perhaps."

"No doc! You got me wrong! I saw it just like I'm seein' you. Hey look! I'll show ya."

I look around the room and spot the

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light switch so I walk over and turn off the lights. It was as dark as the inside of a coal sack. I look at my hands. No glow!

"You see!" I hear the doc's voice. I snap the lights on again. "Just as I told you!" the doc says.

"No doc! You're backing the wrong horse! I know what I saw." I scratch my chin for a minute. You can practically hear the wheels goin' around in my head. Then it hits me. "I remember what it was!" I yells. "It was the shock! ! I got a shock just before I saw the glow! Sure, that's it!"

The doc looks at me like I'm off my rocker but I run over to the other side of the room. He's got a little desk lamp over there. I know it sounds crazy but I remove the bulb and poke my finger in the light socket. The doc runs over to try to stop me so finally I have to poke him one. He sits down hard on the floor and just sort of stares at me, kinda afraid. I stick my finger back in the light socket and it doesn't blow my ears off like it used to. It feels pleasant and kinda funny so I just stands there for a minute, soaking it up.

Then I turns around and looks at the doc. He's looking at me sort of green around the gills and all of a sudden, he grabs his ticker and keeps holdin' on to his chest, gaspin' for breath. I give him a little water and he finally comes around. When he's able to sit up in a chair, he keeps sayin' over and over to himself that it's funny he should have any trouble with his pump. Finally he guesses it is just the shock of seein' my face all lit up like a Christmas tree.

I'd forgotten all about my face up until then 'cause I was worried for fear he might kick off.

So I go over and look at my face. Sure enough! It's shinin' like the moon. My hands too. The doc has me take my clothes off and he looks me over again. I'm glowin' all over right down to the tips of my toes. The doc tells me it's nothin' to worry about and gives me a lot of double talk which all adds up to the fact that he don't know what it is either. But he's got an idea. He's got a friend, a professor over at the university and he thinks this ought to be right up his alley.

I just glanced at the clock. I see I've got to get right along with this 'cause it's ten twenty.

WELL, to make a long story short, I ends up over at the professor's house. He's a queer lookin' duck. Looks sort of like he's been dead a couple of years. I mean he looked sort of dead then. I know he's dead now and I'm not sorry! But I'm gettin' off the subject.

Well, I try to explain it to the professor but he tells me the doc has already called him up and told him all about it. Well, I tell him I'd like to sit and talk about it a little more but I got to get to work. The professor practically goes nuts when he hears this. He wants me to stay there and he makes me promise to sit there and wait while he makes a couple of phone calls.

I'm gettin' jumpy by the time he gets back. Sad Sam gets sore when any of us are late showin' up and as long as Sad Sam is payin' for the groceries, I figure there's no point in gettin' him sore at me. I tell the professor I got to be goin' now, that I've enjoyed talkin' to him and all that, but the professor tells me he's called up Sad Sam and I don't have to worry about goin' to work. He says he told Sad Sam that I was a very sick man and that Sam said to take it easy and not come to work if I didn't feel like it. Well, this doesn't sound like Sam to me. I think if his own mother was a cigarette girl in his joint and she showed up ten min-

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utes late, he'd twist her arm and beat her head off.

Anyway, what the professor says next is the interesting part.

"How much do you make at your—ah,—position?" he asks.

I think quick and see what he's leadin' up to. "Twenty five bucks a day," I says. I only make fifteen but I figure I'm about due for a raise anyway. For a minute, I think I've upped the ante too much for the professor sits and thinks about it for a while but no, he goes for it, hook, line and sinker.

"Twenty five dollars a day," he mumbles. "That would be about six hundred dollars a month, wouldn't it?"

Well, I have my socks on so I can't count up that far so I just nods my head as if I knew all along.

The professor presses his lips together and looks me over. Finally, he asks me, "How much courage do you have Mr. Harper?"

"Ya mean nerve? I got all I need! Why I carried a rod for Capone!"

The professor gives me the stare so I tries to explain. "I mean, I was a hood." Still I get a blank. "You know, a torpedo!"

The professor smiles. "You mean a gunman? Excellent! You're just the man we want!"

"We?" I ask.

"Yes. My associates, my fellow professors." I nods and he goes on. "You see, we have some very interesting experiments and we've just been waiting for a man like you with courage."

"If it's goin' to hurt much you can deal me out!" I says.

"Oh no! I assure you there won't be any pain connected with them and very little risk."

"That's interesting," I says, "go on."

"Well, it's like this. We need a man with your——ah—peculiar talents."

"Ya mean ya want me to rub somebody out?" I asks.

"Oh mercy no! We merely want to conduct some tests. These tests will take about a year and a half but when we are through, they will be of inestimable benefit to humanity."

I get right to the point. "What's in it for me?"

"I was just coming to that," the professor says. "My associates and I are prepared to pay you handsomely. What would you say to——ah——a thousand dollars a month?"

I try to look nonchalant but I can see that the professor reads me like a book so I decides against tryin' to up the ante. "It's a deal," I says.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out an envelope. "All right, Mr. Harper. Here's your first month's salary in advance. We'll have your things moved over to my house. Call me at ten in the morning."

WELL, I stroll out and back down town. That grand is burning a hole in my pocket so I wander into Sad Sam's.

Sam gives me the eye and asks, "What do ya want, bum!"

"Is that any way to talk to me, Sam, your old pal?" I says. "Besides, I'm a sick man. Didn't the doc call ya up?"

"Sick my——," he says. "Now get out of here before I have Pete throw ya out!" He means Pete Shean, the bouncer.

"Now wait a minute, Sam" I says. "I'm on the level."

Sam doesn't answer. He just gives Pete the eye and Pete comes over and looks at the door and then looks back at me. "Get lost, ya bum!" he growls.

Well, Pete has got muscles clear up to his hair so I shrugs my shoulders and walks out.

I see I got to cut this down a little. I just looked at the clock and it's five

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minutes of eleven.

Next day, I drives up to the professor's joint in my new car and we have a chat. The deal is still on so I'm on easy street. Well, a couple of weeks go by and I don't do much of anything. He tries all kinds of crazy tests on me. He sticks me in the arms a few times and takes some of my blood. Then he starts the treatments. He had some sort of a machine that he turned on. It had big wires that led to four big cuffs and these were made out of leather and had brass on the inside. He'd fasten one around each wrist and two more around my ankles. Oh yeah, I forgot to mention that he shaved my head too. I didn't mind this 'cause the professor got me a wig to wear when I went outside.

After the professor gets those cuffs on my wrists and ankles, he puts a big copper bowl down over my head. At first, I'm worried 'cause I begin to glow so bad you can see it in the daylight but the professor says it'll wear off and it did. At the end of the first month I look like any ordinary Joe. It's a funny thing about that electricity, though. When it begins to run through me, I actually like it! In fact, I get a craving for it, something like dope. Every morning I have to have my shot of juice. Oh, I can get along without it. We try it a couple of times but it's kind of like I'm hungry and haven't eaten for a day.

One day, I goes over to see Isabel, my girl and I find she's gone but she's left a note. I reads it over and then I see red. I tear back to the professor and bawl hell out of him. It seems he's told her that I'm a very sick man and I shouldn't keep seeing her. Well, I'm plenty burned but the professor calms me down. He tells me he's givin' her a wad of dough and sendin' her off on a long ocean voyage. Finally, he convinces me that he's doing the right thing although I ain't so sure.

Well, time goes on and a few months later I get a letter from Isabel. It seems she's goin' to marry some sap in South America and settle down and raise kids. I blow my top and take the letter into the professor. He gets real fatherly and says that he's known all along that she isn't the girl for me and that he is only trying to save me. So, I finally calm down. I remind myself that I'm still gettin' a grand a month and that helps a lot. Then the professor starts talkin' about how there are better things in the world than love. He gets a queer sort of gleam in his eye and he asks me which I'd rather do, rule the world or marry Isabel. Well, I thinks it over for a while and I think how nice it would be to go down and kick Sad Sam's sides in and I kinda have to agree with the professor. He lets the subject drop but it sticks in my mind. It isn't like the professor to get all heated up about things.

MORE time goes on and I find that treatments he's givin' me gotta be increased. Now I take 'em twice a day. Then one day a funny thing happens. I'm walkin' down the street not thinkin' about much of anything when suddenly I seem to take off, leave my body behind, and go floatin' in the air. Then I'm myself again and lyin' flat on the pavement. Well, I pick myself up and brush off my suit and trot back to the professor's. When I tell him about it, he gets all excited. I think for a while he's goin' nuts. He runs around the lab grabbing stuff, making tests and everything else. He really gives me the business!

So I let it slide for a while. I don't know what he's drivin' at till all of a sudden one day I look at a calendar and see that my job is nearly over. Just

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one more month! Well, I don't have too much put away and I'd been throwing it around pretty heavy so I get to thinkin' what am I goin' to do when the professor boots me out. Sad Sam has fixed it so I can't get another job. Well, I think some more. The professor has been handin' out this grand every month so he must have plenty salted away.

I know the joint pretty well since I've been livin' there for almost a year and a half, so one night I see the professor go out and I decides to do a little lookin' around. I give the joint a good goin' over and I don't find much of anything. Then I see a letter layin' on the professor's desk. It's all sealed up but it ain't got any address on it so I figure he must have forgotten to take it with him. I think it over and then I decide that maybe this has got dough in it so I take it out in the kitchen and steam it open. Well, I reads it through twice and I don't get it all but I get enough.

MY MOUTHPIECE Jerry Sloan, brought it up with him today, although he doesn't know what I want to do with it. This looks like a good place so I'm goin' to slip it right in here.

Dear Ronald:

Since I spoke to you last there have been many developments which agree perfectly with your predictions. Today, I increased the voltage to five hundred fifty. The amperage remained about normal. At times, it seems fantastic to me that any human being could survive these treatments but then I remember that he is a mutation and not a true human being.

There are some rather peculiar aspects that I would like to know more about. As you know, I thoroughly agree with your theory that division between his mortal body and his body of energy will take place when death occurs. That is, death induced by a sudden increase of current. I am wondering however, if the time is not right to do this. I can see no point in delaying any further since every evidence leads me to believe that this other body is ready for separate life. If you agree, I will electrocute him during one of the regular treatments. However, I shall let your decision be the final one.

I shall take pains in the next few days to impress on him the fact that he will die unless periodically fed by our machine. I am hoping that I shall be able to impress this so thoroughly that he will return here in his energy body and attempt to come in contact with the machine. I am quite sure he will do it eventually but I am very anxious to put the machinery in motion.

As soon as he is in his energy body and has made a few trips to the machine, mental control will be complete. I am quite sure that we will be able to maneuver him just as we please. As a test, I have engendered a hatred between him and his former employer, Sad Sam. I will command him to kill Sad Sam and I'm sure he will be quite willing to do so. If he should prove unwilling, I am certain that he will be unable to resist the mind control.

I am hoping he will prove tractable since it would prove less of a strain. I don't think we need have any fears on that score. After Sad Sam, I plan to send him to kill the president and the cabinet members. There will be no suspicion since you have already proved to me that their death will appear to be heart failure.

I may be hasty but I like to believe that in six months time we will rule the United States and in another year, the world. I can't see how we can fail! I

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know there need be no fear of betrayal since you are just as essential to success as I am. Besides, we have always been friends. I am broadminded enough to realize that there is plenty to divide between us and I shall be quite content as co-ruler of the world.

There are times when I feel a twinge of pity for Harper but then, I realize he will not even know what he is doing and we will take great pains that he never find out. Even if he should find out there is no way in which he can resist the will control that the machine will exert. I'm afraid my hands tremble slightly when I think about it. Power! Power over every living soul! They laughed at both of us but I think that those who laugh will have very little more laughing to do.

The time is growing very short. My calculations today show that there are about nine chances out of ten that we will succeed if Harper is given the final jolt. But I shall play safe and condition him for another month. I was horribly tempted today but I resisted. Just think of it! I will have only to turn the control handle and give him between one thousand, eight hundred and two thousand volts and in an instant, we will virtually be emperors of the world!

I shall have to close or I shall be late for my appointment with Dr. Markle. Poor soul! He doesn't realize that he is second on the list. I shall write day after tomorrow and give you the latest results. I hope you will return soon so that we may check our findings together.

Sincerely,
August Forsythe.

WELL, there it is! Now you see why I did what I did. I may be a heel but I'm not that much of a heel!

I finish readin' that letter for the third time and when I look up, the professor is standin' there. He's got that look in his eye, the same look I saw in that hood's eye when he pumped six slugs in me. I think fast and give him a big grin and says, "Say, professor! Why didn't ya let me in on this before? How soon can we do it?"

Right away the look fades out of his eye. "Ah——," he stammers, "I didn't think you'd be quite so amenable."

I give him the glad eye and say, "What do ya take me for, a jerk? Why I'll be the biggest shot since Capone!"

The professor smiles and I see I got him. "We thought you might be somewhat afraid so we decided to withhold this from you. You realize that there is some risk."

I shrugs my shoulders and says, "Well, in this game ya got to take risks once in a while. I'm game if you are. But how's about tellin' me a little more about what I do after I——I——, what you said about gettin' my new body."

The professor steers me into the lab and starts off on a windy explanation. Finally he bends over the machine to show me somethin'. That's what I been waitin' for. I pick up a heavy iron stand and I takes a swing but I miss. It digs a little groove in his face but he doesn't go down. He screams and runs out of the lab, blood streaming down his face. I run after him. He's a little guy but he can really go and I guess he's scared as hell. I catch him at the front door and gets ready to give it to him when he gives me the knee. I'm bent over by the door tryin' to get my breath and he gets out. Then I'm after him again. It takes me two blocks to catch up with him but he's screaming at the top of his lungs which slows him down. Finally I tackles him at a corner and get him down. This time I'm goin' to make sure and I get one hand around his throat and turns

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his head sideways tight against the pavement. Then I take careful aim and I really bring the iron stand down.

It's funny, I remember it even now. His head crunched just like an egg. The corner of the stand went through his skull and stuck there.

I gets up and stands there lookin' at him stupid like. Then I come to. I remember this guy the professor wrote the letter to and I start to high-tail it back to the lab but just then a prowl car pulls up. I try to duck but they got me spotted. One of 'em takes a good bead and lets me have it through the knee, so down I go.

I guess that's about all there is to it. My mouthpiece does his best but they find me sane so I'm all set to burn. We try everything but no soap. A couple of days ago, Jerry Sloan finds this letter and now he's convinced that I'm nuts and won't touch the case with a ten foot pole. Maybe I am nuts!

IT'S funny! I didn't think of it until a couple of days ago but what they're goin' to give me in the chair is just what the professor was goin' to do to me. If what the professor said is right, then there are nine chances in ten that Sad Sam will be dead when you read this. Then in a couple of months, you'll open the paper and find that the president and the cabinet are gone. If I had only had time to get that guy Ronald!! Sure! I know this sounds as nutty as hell but I'm tryin' to get it all down. I've only got three more minutes so I got to write fast.

There's one way you can know for sure. The professor said that when I got my big shot of juice, there would be a hell of a lot bigger shot go back over the wires again. That is, if it works! I ain't never prayed in my life but I'm prayin' now, and brother you'd better pray too. Pray that I die! But if I don't die, you'd better pray that you can find somebody named Ronald before he finds you!

* * *

This is the end of the manuscript but attached to it is a newspaper clipping from the Ossining Gazette.

MAN BITES EXECUTIONER

OSSINING, July 10.—Luther (Buck) Harper had the last laugh. Last night as he was being executed for the murder of Professor August Forsythe, the equipment short-circuited instantly killing the executioner George Dennis. A small fire started but was easily brought under control. The prison medical examiner states Harper died instantly. The warden informs us that the equipment is being checked and steps will be taken to prevent future accidents. Mr. Dennis is survived by his widow, Louise Dennis, 1246 Grove St.

THE END

DANGEROUS SLEEPWALKERS

By SANDY MILLER

AN ARKANSAS chicken farmer awoke the night to find himself standing over the crib of his beloved daughter whose skull he had just crushed. He had dreamed that he was attacked by someone and that he struck the assailant, but he could remember no more.

Somnambulism is very common, two per cent in adults and twice as many in children. In most cases, a person who would kill in his sleep would never kill while awake. He would be a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde sort of person. A sixteen year old girl in Kentucky dreamed that robbers had entered her home and were attacking her. She got up, loaded two revolvers and fired ten shots, then she found another gun and fired five more times. When she woke up she still held the

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smoking weapon in her hand, and her father and six year old brother lay dead and her mother was hysterical with pain from being shot and from horror. One would think that the explosion of the gun would awaken any sleepwalker, but it has been scientifically proven that a somnambulist can sleep through most anything. A sleepwalker in the army of the last war got up and dressed and passed the guards by giving the right password and went to a big gun emplacement. He did a three man job in taking the tarpaulin off, then he loaded the gun and fired it. The concussion shook the whole countryside but it didn't awaken him. When sleepwalkers wake up they don't remember what they have done, as in the case of Robert Ladru, a French detective that lived about fifty years ago. He was tired from overwork and went to the seashore for a short vacation. He slept real well the first night he was there. In the morning he received a call from his chief asking him to help the local police solve a murder that had been committed on the beach the night before for no apparent reason. So Ladru went to work on it. He studied the bullet and made casts of the foot prints in the sand. He had quite a shock to find that the footprints showed a toe missing, because he had a toe missing on his own foot. And the bullet fitted his gun perfectly. It was obvious that he shot the man in his sleep, returned to his bed and slept till the next day. So he reported his case to his superiors and was acquitted. He retired from service and always after that he slept in a barred room to prevent any more sleepwalking murders.

Some sleepwalkers injure themselves as in the case of an engineer in Colorado. He stabbed himself four times and awoke to find himself bleeding to death. He was dreaming that he was surrounded by enemies and something persuaded him to kill himself.

Mark Twain and Ivan the Terrible were both harmless sleepwalkers. Ivan did all his dirty deeds while he was awake.

* * *

RHAMPSINITOS' THIEF

★ By JUNE LURIE ★

RHAMPSINITOS was king of Egypt preceding Cheops. This king had a great wealth of silver and wishing to store his wealth safely, had a great stone chamber built for a treasury. One wall was toward the outside of the palace. The builder of the chamber had placed one of the stones in such a manner that it could be removed from the wall. When it was completed the king stored all his wealth in it. Unfortunately the builder was near his death, so he called his two sons to him and told them of this loose stone so that they might have ample means of a fine living. After the father died, the sons went to the palace at night and removed the stone and helped themselves to much of the silver. The king was puzzled by his loss because the treasury doors were still sealed shut. Each time he would come to the chamber, he would notice that more had been taken. So he had traps set around the vessels that contained the wealth. When the thieving sons came again, one of them was caught in a trap from which there was no escape. So he persuaded his brother to cut off his head so he wouldn't be recognized and bring destruction to his brother also. It sounded like a good idea to the brother, so he did it and put the stone back in place and went home carrying his brother's head under his arm. The king was so amazed the next day when he entered the chamber and saw the headless thief caught in the trap, and still he could see no way in which the chamber had been broken. So he hung the body on a wall and posted guards around it. If anyone was found weeping or wailing near it, they were to be seized and brought before the king.

The mother was greatly grieved and told her remaining son that if he didn't bring his brother's body home she would go to the king and tell him the whole story. So the surviving son managed to get the guards drunk on wine so that they fell asleep at their posts. Then he took down the body of his brother and hurried home.

Of course the king was terribly angry and desired above all things to find out who was at the bottom of these tricks. So he made his own daughter sit in the stews and receive all men equally. She was told to ask each one what was their most unholy deed till she could find the culprit and then hold him till her father came.

The thief heard of this plan and wanted still more to get the best of the king. So he cut the arm off his dead brother, and went with it under his mantle to the king's daughter. When she asked him about his most unholy deed, he told her the whole story. When she heard this, she tried to grab hold of him till her father could come. But the thief held out to her in the darkness the arm of the corpse which she grasped thinking it was the arm of the man. The thief escaped. When this was reported to the king, he was amazed at the inventiveness and daring of the fellow, so he sent out a proclamation granting full pardon to the thief and also promised a reward if he would come before him. The thief came to the king, and Rhampsinitos marvelled at him and, counting him as most wise among men, gave him his daughter to wed.

* * *

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The door to the Children's Room seemed to waver unsteadily as Walt slowly stepped through it . . .

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THE CHILDREN'S ROOM

by RAYMOND F. JONES

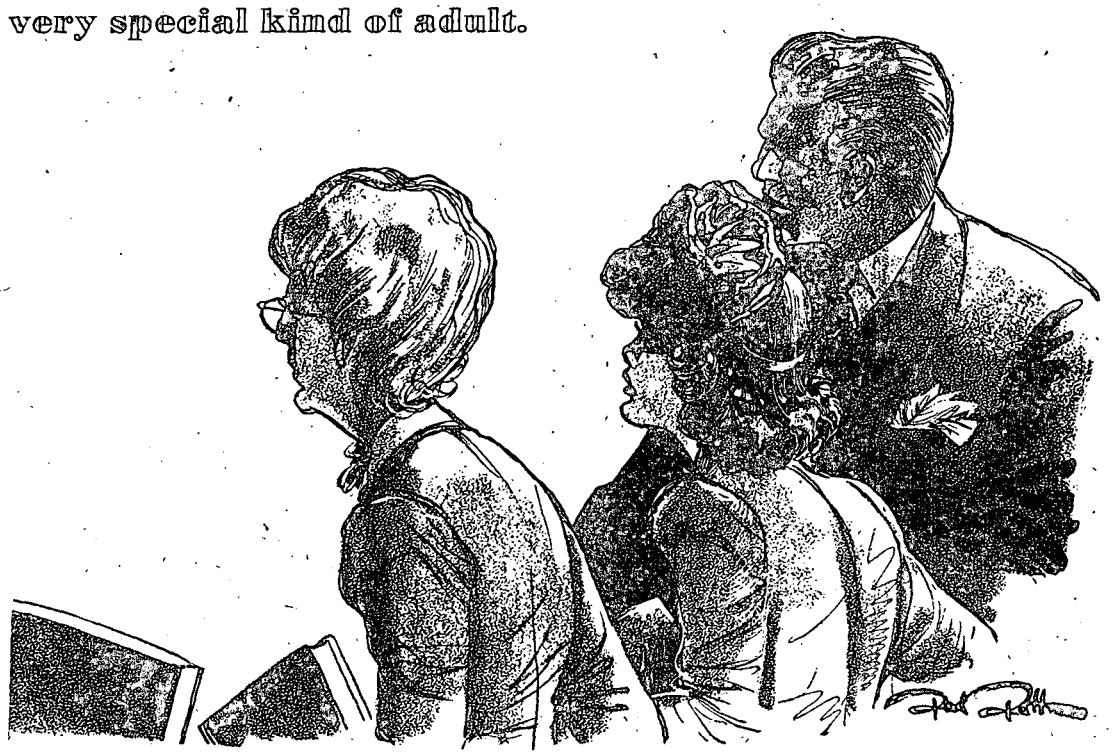
BILL STARBROOK sat down carefully in his battered soup-and-fish and picked up the latest "Journal of Physics." There had been time to read only the first three pages of Sanderson's article on nuclear emissions before he and Rose had gone off to what she euphemistically termed "an evening's entertainment." Now, at two o'clock in the morning, he tried to shake from his head the brain fog induced by the foul air and worse liquor of the cabaret.

Finally he gave it up. It was useless to try to keep up on his science. But that was the price to be paid for being Chief Engineer of an outfit like Bradford Electronics. Commerce before research, and the customer's gin is always the best.

But his day was coming. He was nearly ready to break loose as an independent consultant.

As he moved to lay the Journal down

To find the Children's Room you had to be a child — or else a very special kind of adult.



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he glanced at the spot on the end table at which it was aimed. There was a new book there, one he hadn't seen before. He dropped the Journal into the magazine rack and picked up the unfamiliar book. One of young Walt's. The kid was always bringing in strange volumes from the university and the public libraries. His 240 I.Q. mind was as inquisite as a pup's. He would read anything he could get his hands on.

The present volume looked like something out of an ancient law or medical library to judge by the cover. Walt read as many curdling comics as the average ten-year-old in the neighborhood, but he read voraciously also of everything else from Plutarch's Lives to the Journal of Physics.

Starbrook was somewhat puzzled to find that the ponderous looking tome in his hands was nothing but a fairy tale.

He thumbed through it curiously. There was no accounting for the swift, piercing inquiry of the boy's mind. It was perhaps no more inconsistent that he should find entertainment in a fairy story than that he should find intellectual pleasure in atomic theory. All this while his companions confined themselves to such moderations as comic books and baseball.

The words of the story caught Starbrook's eye. He found himself scanning the sentences, following their meaning. A strange, tantalizing quality escaped him at first, then became plain as he went along. It was the fact that almost every word had a double semantic content. It was like reading two stories simultaneously. He marvelled at the skill that had been required to construct such a tale.

The secondary, or theme story, as he thought of it, held him entranced. It was a curious tale about a group of men different in mental and physical attributes from their fellows. They were sad and lonely because they were isolated from each other and because the human beings with whom they associated did not understand them. Then, magically, there appeared a book that went throughout the Earth and led them to each other and through a door into a place where they lived happily ever after.

A curious tale, it was as if the shadow of a strange and mysterious meaning lay hidden there just beyond the grasp of his imagination. He revised his first opinion. It was the kind of thing that would appeal to Walt, all right.

Then, suddenly, Starbrook awoke to the fact that the time was four-thirty and he could snatch scarcely two hours' sleep before getting down to the labs.

At six o'clock, however, he roused blearily at the sound of movement within the bedroom. Rose was getting dressed.

"What's the big idea?" he said.

"Shh, darling. Go back to sleep. I'll call you in an hour. Walt's been coughing for the last hour. I'm going in to see him. If he has a cold he can't go to school this morning."

STARBROOK shook his head fiercely to try to clear it. He knew it was useless to try to sleep more now. It would only make him more dopey at work. He glanced groggily at the clock and stumbled into Walt's room.

The boy was smothering a cough. He grinned as the spasms ended. "I'm the victim of a filterable virus, Dad. I didn't mean to wake you."

Starbrook sat down on the edge of the bed. "Better stay home today and not let the bugs get any bigger hold on you.

"I guess so, but gee—I've got a li-

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brary book due today and they're awfully strict. Maybe you'd take it back for me?"

"Sure. Where does it go? What book is it?"

"It's on the table in the living room. It's from the Children's Room of the University Library."

"That odd fairy tale book? I looked at it last night. I didn't know they had any such books at the University."

"I didn't either until a month ago. They've got some swell books there. It seems like you go along and think you've just been reading a swell story and all of a sudden you find it's just been teaching you something. Like putting candy on a pill. I sure wish they'd do it that way in school."

Starbrook laughed. "Sounds like a good system. I'll have to have a look into some more of these books they have there."

"I hope you do," said Walt quietly.

"I suppose Miss Perkins is responsible for them. She's always up on the latest stuff to improve the mind of man and beast."

Bill Starbrook was well known around the campus of Hedeman University. He frequented the excellent research library there and had arranged for Walt's special use of the books there, although he was sure that Miss Perkins, the librarian, regarded them both as unconventional interlopers who had no place on a dignified campus.

Pausing on the way to work to return the book, Starbrook found Miss Perkins alone at the desk. He unlocked his brief case and took out Walt's book.

"Good morning, Miss Perkins. I wonder if you'd see that this gets to the Children's Room for me? It's due today and Walt's sick."

Miss Perkins smiled a good morning, then frowned. "The Children's Room? We have no children's department."

She picked up the book and examined its title page and library number. She frowned even more darkly. "You must be mistaken. This doesn't even make sense. It isn't one of our books."

Starbrook grunted in irritation. "I was sure Walt said he got it here."

"It must be from the public library, though I'm sure I don't understand the markings. What is it? Something mathematical?"

Starbrook looked at her and mentally counted to ten. He was in no mood for jokes this morning. He said sweetly, "It's just some fairy tales my boy has been reading."

He left before he observed Miss Perkins' severely pursed lips.

As he turned away, the incident hung on in his mind with irritating persistence. He knew he hadn't been so dopey that morning that he hadn't heard Walt correctly. He was certain the boy had said the Children's Room at the University Library.

Then, as he was almost to the door, he glanced to the left and swore softly. There, over a doorway, was the designation: Children's Room.

What was Miss Perkins trying to pull on him? he wondered. Mathematics—!

HE WONDERED why he hadn't noticed this room before, but he had always dashed through in such a hurry. It could easily escape notice, hidden as it was in a shallow alcove.

The room wasn't very large. Seated at tables were about a dozen children ranging in ages from about eight to fourteen. The librarian at the desk was little and wrinkled. A quality of tremendous age like an aura about her, defied description, but her blue eyes were sharp and young.

She seemed startled by his appear-

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ance. "You haven't been here before!"

Starbrook liked her at once. There was none of Miss Perkins' sourness which he had come to associate with all librarians.

He smiled, "No. My son, Walt, checked this out. He is sick today so he asked me to bring it in."

"Were you—have you read any of this book?"

Starbrook was puzzled by her alarm and amazement at his appearance. "Yes," he said. "It's quite an interesting book. I haven't kept up very well with progress in children's literature."

The little old librarian exclaimed, "This is *so* unusual. I wonder what I ought to—"

Starbrook had about reached the end of his endurance for the day. It was twenty minutes to nine—twenty minutes until he had to meet all his section chiefs for weekly conference.

"I must go now," he said. "If you will just check this book in for my boy—"

The librarian seemed to reach some decision about a matter beyond his comprehension. She lost her helpless expression and smiled gently. "Of course. And would you take this next volume in the series he is reading? Also, I wonder if you would do us the favor of taking a couple of other volumes and glancing over them critically yourself. We have some rather radically different works here and we're anxious to have adult criticism on them."

Starbrook's irritation lessened before her smile and he nodded. "I'll be glad to."

The day passed with all the irritations and commotions that might be expected the day after such a night before as Starbrook had experienced. He was at least relieved to find that it had resulted in clinching the purchase of the Cromwell patents, which had been the object of last night's entertainment.

He was tired when he finally reached home again after such a day, but not too tired to put on a cheery smile for Walt as he told Rose to wait dinner a few minutes. He took the new book and went into Walt's bedroom.

Walt's eyes lighted. "Gee, Dad, I thought you'd never come! You brought me another book! Maybe I could talk you into reading to me."

"Sure. There's nothing I'd like better. The librarian even asked me to take a couple for myself. We'll read right after dinner. O.K.?"

"Sure. I'm glad you saw Miss Edythe. She's a nice old lady, isn't she? She shows me just which books to read so that I won't get mixed up on them."

"Are you supposed to read them in a certain order?"

"Yes. I picked up some out of order one day and they looked like a foreign language. I have to read the first ones to understand the harder ones. I don't know why, but that's the way it is."

After dinner, Starbrook went back and opened the new volume that Miss Edythe had sent for Walt.

"You really can read this stuff, all right?" said Walt.

"Sure, why?"

"Well, you haven't read the first books yet, and I just wondered," Walt said evasively.

Starbrook took up the reading. The story was something of a continuation of what he had read the previous night, the story of the "different" men. In long detail it told how the first man learned that he was different, and how he finally located a few others of his kind. Together, they prepared the magic book and sent it on its way around the world to gather all the rest.

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THE darkness of early autumn slowly filled the room, and the words grew dim on the pages before Starbrook. But within his brain it was as if a glowing, expanding illumination were present. The story that had been secondary in the previous book was now the primary, as he termed them to himself. And the secondary story of this book was a devastating, unbelievable revelation.

"*You* are one of the 'different' men," its unspoken, intangible message shouted within his brain, "and this is the magic book. Follow where it leads and you shall find the haven that has been prepared for all of us!"

He slammed the book shut abruptly as the darkness became too great to see the words any longer, but he could not still that persistent message in his brain.

The white face of Walt lying against the pillow was hardly visible. "Don't stop," the boy said. "Turn on the light and let's go on."

"Walt—" Starbrook hesitated. He didn't quite know how to say it. "What does this mean to you? Do you find any symbolism in it besides the actual story?"

"Sure. It says that we're a different kind of people from most others. It's going to show us how to get to a place where there are others of our kind. We couldn't read it if that weren't so. That's why I'm so glad you can read it. You're one of us, too."

Starbrook was glad the darkness hid his face and his eyes. "How do you know that?"

"Miss Edythe told me that others wouldn't believe that there were ordinary words in these books. She said not to show them to anyone for that reason. I found out she was right."

Disappointment clouded Walt's eyes. "Mom picked up one of the books one day and she seemed almost afraid of it. I told her then that it was algebra. She didn't know the difference, but still seemed afraid. I left it for you on purpose—"

Starbrook had an average amount of imagination for an engineer, but it staggered before the implications of all this. He told himself it was only an extraordinary realism in the story of the "different" men and their magic book. It was fantastic to believe the men and the book had any counterpart in actuality.

Yet in his mind there was a supreme, undeniable knowledge that could not be denied. Before it, his doubts and name calling were the taunts of a little boy before an impossible, white fairyland.

The book existed.

This was it.

The "different" men were real. He was one of them—he and Walt belonged to that mysterious clan.

But who were they? What did this unanswerable knowledge imply?

"I have to do a little work downstairs," Starbrook said. "If you aren't asleep, I'll come up later and read some more."

He went into the living room and opened the first of the two books that Miss Edythe had asked him to look over.

He was surprised to find that these weren't as easy to read as the ones Walt had. The very language was somehow less comprehensible. At once he knew that *these* were not children's books—or were they? Books for the children who had come up through the gradual orientation process of the more elementary volumes?

THERE was no pretense of a story. The book opened at once with an abstruse exposition on the principles of

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biology, heredity, and radiation. It was hard going, but as he continued he seemed to grow in ability to grasp the words and principles. But he tried in vain to imagine the eight-year-olds he had seen in the Children's Room grasping the substance of this work!

Rose came in to protest his staying up, but he refused to quit. His mind was leaping across the gigantic peaks and crags of the magnificent exposition that lay before him. At midnight he put the book down, completed, dimly realizing that he had read and absorbed a work that should have required weeks.

But what was the purpose of it all? Why were such books in a children's department of a library? He still could not credit the insistent, semantic implications of the fairy story that he and Walt were of the "different" men. As yet, there was no explanation of the difference, and the mysterious destination of all these men.

And then the answer came swiftly and like a sudden burst of flame before his eyes. He opened the second of the two volumes which he had not been able to comprehend before. Its words were plain now and addressed directly to the reader.

"You can easily comprehend, now, that you are a mutant."

He stared at the words, trying to shed their meaning from his mind, but they stayed, and he knew the truth of them.

"You have come far enough to understand what that means," the book went on. "You are aware of the extra-terrestrial radiations which are continually producing mutations, and you understand some of the processes by which they are formed. It is not difficult, therefore, for you to understand that you are one of the many thousands of the 'different' men, the mutants who throng the Earth, scarcely knowing that they differ from their fellows in any matter."

Starbrook looked up. It would be easy to admit the truth of this with regard to Walt. With an I.Q. of 240 at the last test—

But Bill Starbrook—what could there be about him to indicate a mutation? He was a reasonably good engineer—but no better than a couple of million other guys. He possessed no unusual marks of mind or body.

"Thousands of mutations occur every month," he read on. "Most of them are lethal because they are of no advantage to the individual or to the race. But over a period of time there are also unknown thousands of beneficent mutations, most of which are also eventually lost.

"They are lost to the race through accident, improper mating or no mating at all. They are lost in many instances to the individual because the differences which they impose render him more or less misfit in social aggregations. There are, of course, numerous other instances in which desirable mutations produce a more intelligent, more enduring, completely superior individual, *who is never recognized by himself or his associates as a mutant.* His characteristics may be passed on for a few generations, but unless combined in proper matings they may become recessive and lost.

"In a time far distant from your own, the human race is in competition with another major race in the galaxy who are out-evolving mankind. In order to maintain not only the superiority which the human race has gained, but its very existence, it is necessary that the natural processes of evolution be speeded. Wasteful and ghastly experiments have proved the impossibility of doing this by artificial means.

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Only through natural processes which cannot be duplicated at will can evolution proceed in an effective manner. But nature, in her waste of precious mutations throughout the ages, is herself responsible for man's dire position in this future day.

"OUR purpose, then, is to accelerate the evolutionary rate of the human race by salvaging the beneficent mutations which have been wasted through the ages.

"You who have come this far with us have a duty now, a duty to join us, to bring your mutated characteristics before the race for the benefit of all."

Starbrook was forced to halt. It was too vast, too foreign for his mind or imagination. He was just Bill Starbrook, Chief Engineer at Bradford Electronics. It just wasn't in the cards for him to be reading some mysterious message out of the ages, pleading with him to come to some unnamed place for the good of the race.

He laughed shortly. Children's Room! Someone had certainly succeeded in producing the most fantastic, incredible fairy tales of all time. Almost had him believing for a moment that he was a mutant! He'd have to tell Miss Edythe that the books were realistic if nothing else.

He strolled out onto the porch. In the clear, cold night the stars looked near. A race had to utilize its mutants, or be outmoded in the contest for evolutionary perfection, he thought. He wondered what the ultimate product of human evolution would be. No doubt it would differ from man as man differed from the anthropoids and reptiles before him.

His eyes on the stars, he thought, were there other spawning races out there somewhere in their infancy, who would eventually challenge man and threaten to sweep him aside in the backwash of hopeless evolutionary superiority?

He brushed aside the maddening thought. There was one way to settle this once and for all. He could see the lights on in the house of Professor Martin, a block down the street on the other side. Martin was head of the ancient languages department at the University and sometimes they played gin rummy together.

Starbrook heaved into his topcoat and quietly left the house with one of the volumes under his arm.

Professor Martin was a big man with a bushy beard. He always reminded Starbrook of one of the ancient Greeks whose language he taught.

He greeted Starbrook with a welcoming roar. "Come in, Bill! I was just hoping somebody would come in for a good game of poker or gin. My wife went home for a week and I've been as lonely as a hibernating bear with insomnia."

Starbrook entered and removed his coat. "I can't stay. I just wanted to show you something and get your opinion on it. See what you make of this."

Starbrook opened the last volume that he had been reading. Its potent message leaped out to him from every character and word, but he turned his eyes carefully to Martin.

The Professor scowled. "Where'd you get this? Certainly these characters are nothing like I've ever seen, and I think I've seen them all."

Starbrook sighed. "I was hoping perhaps that you could read it and tell me what it is. It's—it's something I just picked up in a second-hand store in town. Probably some crazy lingo, something like that Esperanto of a few years ago, only worse."

Professor Martin shook his head. "Possibly. Certainly it isn't recogniz-

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able to me. Would you mind my keeping this for a while?"

"Well—perhaps later. I've already promised it to another friend right away. That's why I came over even though it's so late."

"Oh, that's quite all right! I'm glad to have some company. It's lonely here, you know—"

WHEN Starbrook finally got out under the night sky again, the full force of the knowledge hit him like a blow.

I'm a mutant, he thought. Walt is a mutant. If we weren't we couldn't read these unknown characters as if they were plain English, while Martin and others find them unintelligible. And that must mean that all the rest of it is true, too.

And yet, there was still no meaning to it. This talk of a distant time, and a strange place of meeting for mutants out of all the ages—

That little old librarian, Miss Edythe, was evidently the key to the whole business. She knew the source of the books. She could tell him what it was about.

Then abruptly he remembered something he had not thought of during the evening. Miss Perkins' words: "We have no Children's Department!"

Starbrook was waiting at the outer entrance the following morning when the library building was opened by Miss Perkins herself. She recognized Starbrook and smiled bleakly.

"Good morning."

"Good morning, Miss Perkins."

He passed on into the foyer and turned in the direction of the Children's Room. Through the open door he could see Miss Edythe already at her desk. And that was curious, since the library had just been opened. He glanced back as Miss Perkins passed on her way into the main library office. She looked at him—and at the door of the Children's Room as if nothing were there!

It gave Starbrook a sudden feeling of peculiar dread. He hurried in and found numerous children sitting about the tables in the room. He wondered how they had got in there.

"Good morning, Mr. Starbrook," said Miss Edythe. "I was hoping we'd see you this morning. Did you get time to glance over the books I asked for an opinion on?"

"Yes, I read them completely."

"That's fine. What do you think of what you read?"

"Miss Edythe—have you read these books? Do you know what is in them?"

"Why, surely. I've read every book in here quite carefully. It's been my life's work."

"Then what is the explanation?"

The little old lady looked at him soberly out of her bright blue eyes, then moved from the chair on which she sat before the checking desk.

"Please come into the office," she said.

Starbrook followed her. She closed the door of the small room and sat down, bidding him to have a chair opposite.

"Yours is quite the most difficult case that has ever come to my attention," she began hesitantly. "In five hundred years there has been only one adult who appeared as suitable material for our colony. You will excuse me if I seem to oversimplify things because I am used to speaking with children—children, however, generally with an intelligence quotient of above 220, so that perhaps we can understand each other well enough after all.

"You recall, in the second of the books I gave you, the challenge to you as a mutant—"

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"That's what I came to ask about! The whole business is so unbelievable, but I checked on the books. They couldn't be read by one of the University language professors."

"That should contribute considerably to your conviction of the truth of what you have read, then," said Miss Edythe.

"You mean there is actually a group of mutants somewhere who have been gathered to—to save the suman race?"

"We hardly like to speak of it so melodramatically—but that is essentially our purpose. We're working to maintain the superiority of the human race in the face of an evolutionary lag from which we suffer. If we do not maintain that superiority it will certainly result in our eventual extinction. These are of course probabilities which have been worked out by our scientists who understand such things. Sufficient for the moment is the fact that we are gathering out the mutants of all the ages of man's history in order to accelerate human evolution. By the proper utilization of these mutants we intend to out-evolve, outstep our competitors in the galaxy who threaten our supremacy and our existence.

"I CANNOT be aware of your past concept of mutants. With the children it is easy because they learn from the beginning the true character of mutations, the fact that a small variation in the gene for some characteristic may produce an individual with changes from the norm of his race, and highly advantageous both to himself and to the race. Mutations, however, are generally of such a minor character that their possessor is unaware of the variation. This is one important fact to remember in connection with our work.

"Unless, however, we can become aware of these valuable mutations and utilize them we are going to be left behind in the backwater of evolution much as the great apes were when man appeared."

Starbrook stared dumbly, trying to comprehend.

"A group of us long ago set out to preserve the useful mutants of the race from the earliest beginnings. We have many methods of accomplishing this. This library is one of the most effective. We have devised a language, in which our books are printed, which is intelligible only to mutants. There is a certain brain characteristic which might be termed mutant-linked, which makes this possible. That is, when any kind of gene variation occurs there is also an inevitable variation of another gene at a specific locus which makes the brain receptive to a good many other stimuli, most of which you have never been aware because the stimuli have not been presented. This language is one such stimulus. Another ability your mutation gives you is that of entering the room here."

"Why, I just walked in!" exclaimed Starbrook.

Miss Edythe smiled. "Yes, of course. But haven't you wondered why no others also walk in, why it is that only the mutants enter?"

"Why—yes, but—"

"This inscription, 'Children's Room,' above the doorway appears to non-mutants as only a portion of the decorative design of the library building. You read it because it is in the mutation language. In addition, there is a complex pattern on the floor in front of the doorway, which marks a pathway for you to follow into the room. It is a path which no one would possibly chance upon, but your mutated senses follow it instinctively. To others, there is simply no doorway, no Children's Room at all."

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"But what is the nature of my main mutation?" Starbrook demanded.

"That will have to be determined by proper examination. And there's one final warning I must make. Don't expect too much. The disappointments among us mutants are great. For example, in my own case the mutation was that of longevity. I am something over nine hundred years old—"

"Nine hun—!"

Miss Edythe nodded. "Yes. And combined with my particular mutation is a linked sterility factor. As I say, the disappointments among our group are great."

Her ancient eyes seemed suddenly to be peering down the ages, and Starbrook thought afterward that it was that moment of looking into those strong eyes that had seen so many alien centuries that did most to convince him of the truth of the entire matter.

"What am I to do?" he said at last.

"You will join us?"

"My son, Walt, too?"

"He has much to learn yet before we can present the entire plan to him."

"It's difficult to answer your question," said Starbrook. "I just don't know—"

"It's hardly more than moving to a strange city," said Miss Edythe, "except that your neighbors and associates will be from all ages and locales of time and space. In a way you will find it highly invigorating. Of course, there are ties that must be severed, friends, your wife— It is difficult that you are an adult!"

Rose!

FOR the first time he took full cognizance of the problem this created with respect to his marriage. Subconsciously, he supposed that she would share in whatever change was involved. If leaving Rose were one condition of joining the mutants he was certain that they could well do without his contribution in the future as they had evidently done in the past.

But what of the children? he thought suddenly. Did it mean that they were to leave—?

There was a new cold tightness within him as he said, "Could I have the examination to determine what I'm good for, before I decide the matter?"

"Yes, it can be arranged immediately. Please follow me."

They left by another door that led into a corridor which Starbrook knew was no part of the library building of Hedeman University. As they crossed it, he got a glimpse through a broad window and gasped audibly. The scene was one of green rolling hills dotted with small clusters of white buildings, a valley of serenity and life instead of the idiotic cluster of masonry that formed the cities of his own age.

His guide allowed no time to ponder the scene. She led him through the door across the hall. Inside he found himself in the midst of a roomful of unfamiliar looking equipment. A young, professional looking man greeted him with a smile.

"Doctor Rogers," said Miss Edythe in introduction. "He will conduct the examination. He knows about you. Come back to my office when you are through."

She left then, and Rogers indicated a chair. "It's a pleasure to have a full grown individual to talk to for a change," he said amiably. "Sometimes those pre-adolescent brats with I.Q.s of 250 to 300 are just a little too smart for their pants. I was one of them so I should know. Now, if you'll just lie back here on this table—"

Starbrook struggled desperately to hold to the fragments of his mind that constituted Bill Starbrook, Chief Engi-

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neer of Bradford Electronics. That was all that was real. This world of fantastic Miss Edythe who was nine hundred years old, and the window that looked out upon a green valley where Hedeman should have been were only parts of a nightmare from which he would awake, the nightmare of being examined for possible useful mutations to aid the human race in its attempts to hurdle the laws of evolution.

He endured the long hours of the examination by repeating this fancy over and over again. Then, at last, Doctor Rogers announced that he was through.

Starbrook faced him across a desk. Before the doctor was a mass of records and charts, the accumulations of the tests.

"I have here your complete chromosome map," he said slowly.

"What mutations do I have that I can contribute to the advancement of man's evolution?"

There was a moment's hesitation, then Rogers looked up from the charts. "I may as well give it to you straight. The answer is: none. Absolutely none."

For a moment Starbrook sat stunned. During the past hours he had built up a vast mental structure on the premise that he was needed in assisting humanity reach the heights. He had fought through the battle of deciding what sacrifices it would be worth. Now—

"None—?" I don't understand. "Miss Edythe told me— The mutation language—"

"Your case is most unusual. The total of your mutations consists only of the sensory characteristics by which you were able to read our mutation language, and find your way into the Children's Room. I don't recall a single instance previously where this mutation was not linked with some other. It is somewhat interesting from a purely biological viewpoint, particularly in view of the fact that you are the father of Walt. Practically, however, your mutation has no value whatever."

STARBROOK laughed then, his voice unable to disguise his disappointment and a vague shame. "So I am no use to you after all? I have nothing that is of use to my race?"

Rogers looked at him intently. "Don't emphasize the significance of this," he warned. "It means nothing whatever to you as an individual. You must realize that only one out of every few hundred human beings has any detectable mutation. Only one out of many thousands of mutations is of real value to the race.

"We are able to eliminate the children who are of no value to us without revealing what it's all about. Your case has been obviously different."

"Of course," said Starbrook. "Don't misunderstand me. I'm not going to be bitter about this. I had no right to expect anything out of it. I suppose I've always been sort of an idealist, hoping to do something to lift men up, and all that sort of thing. I guess somewhere my subconscious must have grabbed hold of this pretty hard and seen in it a chance to realize those idealisms. But, anyway, what about my son, Walt?"

"We *must* have Walt. We absolutely must. His mutations appear to be the apex of endless unknown processes of nature, culminating in potentialities that will make him one of the most valuable members of our mutants' colony. His life will change the race for generations to come."

"He doesn't know all this yet?"

"No. Even with his high understanding it must be fed to him slowly because he is a child. But he is being

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educated by the books to the point where he can be given full knowledge of his potentialities and our requirements."

"But what of his relationship to us! I'm not yet convinced of the urgency of this crisis you've spoken vaguely of—not sufficiently to make me ready to allow my son to begin a new life here with perhaps infrequent contact with us."

"Once he comes here and begins his work," said Rogers incisively, "there will be *no* further contact with you."

Starbrook stared in disbelief. "You mean you expect us to give you our son as completely as if he were dead?"

"Watch your semantic extensions," Rogers said drily. "I doubt that anything could convince a member of this age of the urgency of our problem, but in your case I'd like to try, for several reasons.

"Imagine, if you will, two planets on which life had simultaneous beginnings and similar forms of development. On one of these, however, the natural rate of mutant occurrence and consequent evolution is several times that of the other, so that by the time man—so-called modern man—appears on one, the great apes are just beginning to appear on the other.

"Imagine then, the situation when the world with slower evolving life forms has advanced to the point where man appears. What of the other world and the relationship between the two in case they should make contact?

"This is roughly the situation as it existed in the 'normal' time in which this superior race was discovered. We found them as far ahead of us as we are ahead of the great apes today—and incidentally there is far greater physical differentiation between them and us than between us and the apes.

"AS MIGHT be expected, they regard us as little more than we would regard the apes—rather clever apes. Our movements through space, our mechanical achievements are no more to them than the work of clever apes. Though they appear to be a moral, peaceful race they can find no basis for compassion towards us or interest in communication or trade. There is only one possible relation between us, as there has always been only one possible relation between man and the lower forms of life on earth—that possibility is exploitation.

"Our scientists have demonstrated by means you would not be aware of that this exploitation of man by these —super-men—is inevitable. The hope of combating them and so preventing their exploitation of Earth and man is about as great as a tribe of apes would have of preventing capture by an army of hunters equipped with every scientific gadget you know, from radar to atomic bombs.

"There is only one hope for the future of our race: That is to bring ourselves to an equal or superior level with respect to this rival race. And it must be done within the space of a very few human generations, according to our predictions. The mutant colony was founded about one generation ago as soon as the full picture of conditions became apparent. Our work indicates that we can feel confident of success, because mutations have been abundant in the development of man. Nature seems to have been generous but wasteful of them.

"We have already produced a generation of the next form of man, and the individuals of that generation are applying all the powers of their minds to the problem. As you can see, our facilities are pyramiding rapidly, since we have created the next form of man

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and *they* are busy on the problem of going a step beyond.

"But, back to Walt. We need him. He carries three extremely valuable, recessive mutations which have never been discovered before. We feel that he will enable us to make the second step beyond man as you know him. You wouldn't dare interfere with that critical advancement, if you could understand the full depth of the problem. Unfortunately, first-hand knowledge cannot be given you."

Starbrook had been listening with a gradually increasing tension that left his muscles aching as he abruptly shook his head and forced his attention away from Rogers' face.

"I don't know," he said. "I just can't grasp it all so suddenly. If only I could see for myself—"

"You can't," said Rogers with finality. "Ordinarily, of course, we do not complicate our operations with these problems. It is only the accident of your own peculiar mutation that you have become aware of us at all. We *could* act without your consent at all—"

Starbrook felt a sudden frantic chill sweep through him. He had seen enough to know that these mutants could do as Rogers said. They could steal Walt away and banish him forever in this strange land beyond the doors of the Children's Room.

"It is against our principles to cause pain to anyone," Rogers continued. "You are a scientist. I want you to follow the teachings provided your son. Study along with him. Learn the facts of our science and finally details of the crisis that faces humanity. If you are not convinced by then, perhaps the Council which controls these matters will bow to your possession, though, frankly, I doubt it. Walt is too important to us."

"But how can you take *any* of these children without causing pain? How many parents are willing to see them taken away forever? You can't just take them away and leave a vacuum where they have been!"

"No, we don't do that." Rogers hesitated a moment, then he stepped to a door and called to someone. He sat down again. "We do not simply yank an individual out of his environment and leave a vacuum. That would cause too much disruption of your society, considering the numbers we have taken. It would lead to too much pain."

At that moment a figure moved into the room from the doorway through which Rogers had called.

"Walt!" Starbrook rose in amazement. "I didn't know you were here!"

But the boy did not answer, or even look at Starbrook with any recognition.

"He is not finished," Rogers explained.

"WHAT do you mean?" Starbrook saw now the empty expression on the boy's face, repulsive in its vacuousness. Terror seized him and he staggered back into the chair from which he had risen.

"When we take someone, we provide a substitute to insert in their environment," said Rogers. "We create a homolog such as this and make the substitution without the knowledge of anyone except the one who joins us."

Starbrook's horror mounted. "You expect to take Walt and leave us this —this monster!"

Sudden, terrible pain crossed the boy's face and Rogers rose with a snarl of rage. He led the boy out of the room and returned.

"Starbrook! You're supposed to be a scientist. Act like one!"

"I'm Walt's father first. You could hardly expect me to give up my son and accept that—thing of yours as a sub-

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stitute!"

"I suppose I was stupid to think that you could view this matter with any degree of objectivity. We should have simply made the substitution without your knowledge as we have done in all other cases."

"Do you think you could have done that without our knowing your homolog wasn't our son?"

"Of course. It has been done in thousands of other cases. This homolog *is* your son in every respect—or will be when he is completed. Every emotional pattern, memory, instinct, and physical form and composition that goes into your son's makeup is being duplicated. With the exception, of course, of the creative mutations which set Walt apart from other men, and which cannot be duplicated in the homolog. The homolog will fill Walt's place in life in every respect. He will grow and develop and respond to his environment in a manner parallel to that of Walt. He can live a normal, useful life. He can marry, though not reproduce. He has an intelligence comparable to Walt's and will be professionally superior. If you love him or hurt him, if you make him happy or sad, you are doing it to Walt. He *is* Walt. His emotions and feelings are simply transplants, so to speak, of those of your son. That is why you hurt him so terribly just now when you despised him as a monstrosity. What would Walt's reaction be if you called him that? It will take considerable effort to eradicate that painful experience from the homolog mind."

Abruptly, Rogers rose. "You may have time to think it over. Our final course of action will be decided by the Council. I am only a technical advisor in these matters, but I can tell you that you will be doing yourself, your son, and the human race a great service if you try to comprehend the things you have seen and heard; conversely, a great disservice."

ROGERS hesitated. "Perhaps the easiest solution would be for you to come here. It might be arranged since you have the one essential mutation. You could be useful as a technician. A homolog could, of course, be provided to take up the life you leave."

Starbrook, from where he sat, could see the distant view of the strange valley through a window across the room. It bespoke of serenity and peacefulness such as he had not known, and there was evidence of science here such as he had not dreamed of. But he had no purpose here. The invitation was a mere concession to the accident of nature that had granted him his single, useless mutation.

As for leaving Rose—

"Thanks," he said, "but, no."

Rogers nodded and escorted him back to Miss Edythe's office. She was disappointed when Starbrook told her what had happened.

"I'm terribly sorry," she said, "but the world of mutants is a disappointing place, as I told you before. I suppose we won't be seeing you again, but we'll look forward to the visits of your son. Would you care to take along a couple of new volumes for him?"

The world seemed to have taken on a curiously unreal quality to Starbrook as he left the building and got into his car. He drove mechanically through the streets and along the highway that led to the outskirts of the city where the Bradford Electronics plant was located.

There, he secluded himself in his office with orders to his secretary to keep everyone else out for a while. He leaned back in his chair. Through the

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window he could see the hazy, disordered landscape of the city, just as through that other window only a few moments ago he had seen the peaceful scene out of that unknown era of the future.

He had not illusions about the reality of that strange vision. The experience carried its own conviction. He knew that he had seen the miracle of a scene from the future, and had spoken to men whose lives lay far ahead of his in the time continuum.

His mind speculated at the fringes of his experience, ever trying to dodge the core of it. But at last he forced himself to face it.

Walt.

He tried to submerge the subjective factors in his mind and consider the things he'd heard as a scientist should consider them. He didn't doubt the truth of Rogers' statements—and when he once admitted that to himself he was was left helpless.

Walt would go.

He would carry forward the mutations which he bore so that the race might profit.

It was as simple as that, and there was no alternative.

But that conclusion released the flood of subjective opposition that his mind had held in check. Were a man's feelings for his son to be wholly ignored? They weren't, he reflected bitterly. They were supposed to be expended upon some grisly automaton shaped in the imaage of his son. Surely Rogers would destroy the thing after he'd seen Starbrooks' reaction to it.

And Rose.

Up to now he'd left her reactions out of his thoughts. She was no scientist. She had never pretended to understand the objective, selfless attitudes of science. Surely she would not be able to do so in this. It would be impossible to convince her that Walt's destiny lay with the mutants of a future age.

And what of Walt himself?

Soon he would be faced with full understanding of the thing that he was and his possibilities. Would he choose to go with the mutants?

There was little doubt that he would. The genius of the boy's mind was tempered with an emotional stability that would let him see the problem whole, that would let him evaluate it without fear and personal prejudice—as Starbrook knew that he should be doing, himself.

THEY *could*, of course, forbid his further study of the books of the Children's Room. They could enforce their will upon him by sheer physical means.

And for the rest of his life he would hate them with an untranscended bitterness. In any profession he undertook he would be taunted by the incubus of longing for lost worlds and vanished dreams. And with it would ride hate—hate and revulsion for the thing that his parents had done.

Starbrook sighed wearily and put away that bitter vision. He forced himself to recognize that he was completely helpless. The decision lay not with him, but with Walt.

He'd have to tell Rose, somehow, he thought. That was the hardest part of all. Harder still, because she could not comprehend the mutant language or see that world of the future. All of it would have to be understood only as he could tell it.

For a while he tried futilely to dispose of some of the work on his desk. It was no use. He cleared it off and gave necessary instructions to his secretary, telling her he'd be back in the

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morning.

When he reached home, Rose met him in the front hall, her face reflecting her startled surprise.

"Bill! What are you doing home at this time? Nothing's wrong—?"

"Of course not, darling." He lifted her with his hands on her waist. "Just got lonesome for home cooking for lunch. What's on?"

"Bill, you silly. There's nothing on—nothing that would satisfy your gourmandizing. Some fruit salad, sandwiches—for me and Walt."

"Swell. Lead me to it."

It isn't going over, he thought. This isn't the right approach. But how can I say it? What am I going to tell her—

After lunch, he led her into the living room and drew her down beside him on the sofa.

"Bill, what's wrong? Something is on your mind."

He smiled uncertainly. "Yes. There is something special I want to tell you, something I've got to make you understand—about Walt."

"Walt! What has happened—?"

"Something good. It's happened, or *is* happening, and he's going to need all our help and understanding. Darling, do you know what a mutant is?"

Rose furrowed her brow. "I remember something about them in college biology. Six legged calves, fruit flies with extra wings—"

"Yes, but that's the wrong kind. Every improvement in living creatures from the dawn of life has come about through mutations, changes in characteristics of offspring from those of their parents. Rose, Walt is a mutant."

Uncertain disbelief, shock, and revulsion moved in waves across her face. Then slowly, Bill Starbrook began his story. He explained about the books, the Children's Room, and his own experiences there. He told of the mutant colony and their struggle to step up the evolutionary rate of the human race to keep from being swept aside and exploited by more rapidly advancing races. Then he told of the need of Walt's potentialities in that struggle.

WHEN he was finished, Rose was sitting still as ice, her face expressionless. When he touched her hand, it was cold.

"You can't expect me to believe such a story," she said at last. "It isn't true. It couldn't possibly be true. Things like that don't happen."

"They *have* happened," Starbrook pointed out, "perhaps thousands of times in our own generation. It is only by accident that I found out about this instead of Walt being swept away without our knowledge."

"This must be some kind of a crazy joke, Bill. You can't have believed a word you've said. Why are you telling me this?"

"There are the books—"

"Those books. Yes. Ever since Walt first brought them home I've felt their evil influence. Why, no one can even read them. The characters are like cabalistic scribbling of ancient spells and mysticisms. I *can* believe almost that they are responsible for such fantasies as you have described—in your minds."

"Rose." And suddenly Starbrook knew it was no use, but he went on. "Walt and I can read those books. To us, the characters make sense—because we have the mutations that enable us to read them."

"Please promise me you won't let Walt bring any more of them to the house. Whatever it is that has seized his imagination—and yours—will gradually be forgotten if he doesn't have them around."

Starbrook kept silent. As he looked

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into Rose's eyes he knew she would never believe this thing. Not until it was too late, anyway—

"I'll see what I can do with Walt," he said wearily. "We can't suddenly force him to avoid the books. He would read them in the library at any cost. But I promise I'll watch him and keep him from being hurt by them."

He got into the car again and drove away. His disappointment hung like a pall over everything, but he had not expected more, he told himself. He could not expect Rose to act differently. Her utterly conventional mind with its lack of scientific training was a narrow highway over which such ponderous vehicles of revelation could never pass.

Suddenly, he realized he had no destination. He didn't want to go back to the office. He glanced down at his briefcase in which lay the books Miss Edythe had given him for Walt. He'd forgotten to take them to him. He turned downtown and went into the reading room of the public library. There, he began studying the new volumes.

With what was almost a pathetic eagerness now, he wanted to devour every concept of the mutants' colony which he could obtain. He wanted to know that world in which Walt was going to live in all the detail he could.

With somewhat of a shock he realized he was now thinking in terms of Walt's going as a foregone conclusion. Now he wanted to preserve for himself every common facet of experience that would link them after Walt had passed irrevocably through time and space to a far future.

He found the present volumes suddenly different from those that Walt had previously been given. The pretense of fiction and fairy tales was gone. The information being given now was straight stuff. So abstruse was it that Starbrook wondered how Walt could possibly absorb it, but he felt certain that the mutants had made no mistake. They knew what they were doing.

There began to appear new bits of information that he knew was not a part of Earth's science in this age. As he read on, he moved farther and farther into the difficult unknown of the mutants' science.

Slowly, his scientific objectivity began to predominate the mixture of feelings within him. Here was material that would be of inestimable value to his own age. It would be tragic to let it get away without making some attempt to preserve it. He wondered if the mutants would have any objection to that. Evidently not, since Rogers knew he had free access to everything that Walt obtained from the library, and had even advised him to go along with Walt.

HE DECIDED to go back to the plant after all. It was late and near quitting time when he arrived, but the photo lab was still open. He took one of the books and gave it to Joe Coppers, the photo technician.

"How soon can you shoot the whole thing? Photostats of each page, say three copies."

The technician frowned as he glanced at the unintelligible pages. "What the devil—?" Then he glanced at Starbrook's face.

"We can get it out tomorrow," he said quickly, "if it's that much of a rush job," he said. "We've just finished up the instruction book work on that BC-124A set—"

"Good. I'll be around tomorrow for it—and have some more for you."

When he returned home neither he nor Rose made any mention of the incident of the afternoon. Together they

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went up to Walt's room to see how he was. His cold was better and he was lying impatiently reading one of the mutants' books.

Rose's face showed only a flicker of emotion as she saw the book, then she returned the smile that Walt gave them.

"Gee, Dad, I thought you were never going to get home. Mom says you were here for lunch and never came up to see a guy flat on his back. What kind of business is that?"

Starbrook ruffled his hair. "Very urgent business or I'd have come up. How're your viruses—or what the devil do you call more than one of the bugs—"

"They find me pretty poisonous. I'll be up tomorrow."

"Not quite," laughed Rose.

"How about us working on our chess game while Mom gets supper, Dad? We ought to have time for a couple of moves. O.K. Mom?"

"Sure. You go right ahead. I'll bring yours on a tray."

When Rose was gone, Walt looked at the briefcase that Starbrook still held. "Did you bring some more books for me?"

Starbrook nodded. He drew out the first of the two that Miss Edythe had given him. "We've got to do something about keeping these under cover from now on. They worry your mother. She's afraid of their influence. She can't understand what you or I can comprehend in them. I tried to tell her a little about them this afternoon. That's what I came home for. It's hopeless. She wants you to get rid of them. You'll have to do that or else study them under cover."

For a moment Walt's young face seemed whiter against the pillow and at last he shook his head. "I can't do either. I can't stop until I know where this is leading. And one of the things I need most is Mom's understanding of it. Don't you understand?"

"Yes—I do, but I don't know what you can do about it."

"Why couldn't I teach her to read these books? It seems to me that this language or whatever it is should be so simple to understand. Don't you think so?"

"I don't know. I had never thought of that. Why don't you see?"

Surely it would be worth a try, Starbrook thought. He had never supposed that it would be possible for anyone not possessing the particular mutation to be able to read the language. But it was worth hoping for. Walt *needed* all the understanding he could get. It was beginning to tell on the boy's face, the uncertainty and the glimpsing of new worlds that were terrifying in their impact upon his mind. His yearning and his gift of understanding went out towards his son, but there was so little that was tangible that he could do. He wondered what would happen when the full impact of knowledge of what he was expected to do came to him. But Starbrook had no thought that Walt would turn down the opportunity. In spite of the terrifying aspects of it, Walt would leap at the chance to join the mutants. There was no doubt of that. If only Rose could come to some understanding before it happened—

"Try it tomorrow," said Starbrook suddenly. "Try to get your mother interested in learning the language of the books."

DURING the forenoon of the following day, Starbrook was forced to return his attention to his work at the plant. Development on a police transceiver was in a boggle, and he spent the whole morning in the lab working with the engineers on it. By early afternoon he broke away long

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enough to go down to the photo lab.

"Got my stuff ready?" he asked Joe Coppers. "Here's another one for you."

"I hope you and your Chinese friends know what this is all about," grinned the technician. He handed Starbrook the thick piles of photostats.

Starbrook looked at them. "This isn't the stuff I gave you!"

Joe Coppers looked startled. "Sure it is. Here's your original. Same stuff. What's the matter—?"

Starbrook continued to stare at the photostats—and at the original copy. Then he knew what the trouble was. The photostats were absolutely unintelligible to him. Only the original books provided the proper stimuli for his senses. There was something beside the mere form of the symbols—something in the very materials of the book itself.

Slowly, he picked up the books and nodded towards the pile of photostats. "Toss that junk away, Joe. I was wrong. There won't be any more. This stuff won't photograph."

The technician gaped as Starbrook walked out. After the door closed, he swore volubly.

In his office once more, Starbrook faced the problem that the only way to record the material he wanted to preserve would be for him to read it aloud. He ordered up one of the long time magnetic recorders which would run a full day without attention. It would take endless hours of his time. Perhaps he could get Walt to do some of it after the boy was a little farther along.

He began the long task with the volumes at hand and worked until long after everyone else had gone. He called Rose and told her he'd be late. It was after eleven that night when he finally decided to quit and go home.

He expected the lights to be out in the house. Walt would be asleep, and Rose always went to bed early when she was alone. But when he drove in the driveway the front of the house was ablaze with light.

As he entered the front door, Rose looked up. With somewhat of a start, Starbrook noticed she had one of the mutants' books on her lap.

She saw his glance go towards it at once.

"I'm afraid, Bill," she said in a thin, fear ridden voice. "I've never been so afraid in my life."

"Rose—!"

"Walt wanted to try to teach me to read these books. Just to humor him I let him and I found out that I *can* learn it. Already I can pick out words and sentences, even whole paragraphs here and there. Oh, Bill, I don't want to read it!"

"But you must—now that you know you can," he said quietly. "You know that, don't you?"

She nodded, her face tight with terror. "That story you told me yesterday. It can't be true—!"

"Please, Rose." He sat down beside her and tightened his arm around her shoulders. "We've got to realize that we've had a very wonderful privilege in knowing Walt—in bringing him into the world, because he's going to do something wonderful for all of mankind."

"I just can't think of it that way. I just can't. He's my baby."

"Yeah," said Starbrook thickly. "He's mine, too—"

HE WONDERED how long it would be now. Walt's cold was soon better and he returned to school. He brought home new books regularly from the Children's Room, at the rate which the mutants allowed.

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Starbrook labored fiercely to keep up with Walt's speed in understanding the new science revealed in tantalizing snatches and mere introductory expositions. He had to depend now on Walt's interpretations to a great extent and the work of transcribing the information to the recorders went slowly, even with Walt's assistance in the reading and segregation of material.

In growing tension, Starbrook began to greet each day somehow as if it were the last he would ever know. He tried to suck the essence of living from each passing moment, for he knew that almost any time now the mutants would reveal their purposes to Walt and claim him for their own. And in that moment something of Starbrook would be eternally dead.

His admiration for Rose increased as she continued doggedly her study of the mutant language. It had seemed easy for her at first, but now it became apparent that she would never get past the first volumes in which the situation of the mutants scattered throughout the Earth was presented in fantasy and allegory.

But Starbrook was not prepared for the change which was becoming more apparent in Rose day by day. The terror was slowly giving way to a strange serenity, almost a resignation that was in itself somehow frightening to Starbrook. It seemed as if she had found some secret of her own in those pages, which neither he nor Walt had discovered.

He wanted to ask her about it, but he knew that when this new feeling came to a focus she'd tell him.

She did. It was just two weeks after Walt had started back to school. They were sitting in the early twilight on the front steps watching Walt riding away on his bicycle to join the baseball game in the park two blocks away.

"It will be lonesome," said Rose suddenly, "but there'll be happiness in memory."

Rose!

"It seems like I've found out just this moment what those stories in your mutants' books have been saying all this time. I've read them over and over, and I can't go beyond the stories, but I understand *them* now."

"What do you understand?" said Starbrook.

"I understand that Walt *is* different. I think I've always known it, really. Not just his high intelligence, but other things, too. I understand now that he is one of the lonely men whom the book has been sent into the world to gather. I know that unless he goes with his own kind he'll be forever lonely and his life will be wasted. I wouldn't want that, no matter what the pain of sending him away might be."

"The—story—convinced you of that?"

STARBROOK pondered the semantic power of the mutant language. What secrets lay behind its powers to shape the human will to the wishes of the writers might never be known, but he knew there was a vast science evident here that was hardly dreamed of in his age. Semantics that could reduce all Rose's fears to a calm serenity and persuade her that her only child should be sacrificed to the unknown future of the race. There was no understanding such powers yet—

He said, "It will be easier on Walt when he knows, now that you are willing for him to pursue his own destiny."

"We've had him for ten happy years. It's been a lot. When will they tell him?"

"I don't know. Whenever they think he's ready. It might be any day now."

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Starbrook had told himself that he was prepared, but when the moment came he knew that he could never have been equipped to accept the fact unemotionally.

It was the very next day when he came home from the plant that he found Rose and Walt together in the living room. Something went dead within him at the sight of their white faces. They had both been crying.

"They told me today," said Walt without waiting for him to speak. "They told me what you already knew all the time."

Starbrook fought down the tight swelling in his throat. "Yes, I knew. I've been waiting for you to become ready."

"But you're not g o i n g?" Walt looked in agonized despair from his father to his mother and back again. "Somehow I'd always thought because you could read them, too—that you were like me—"

Starbrook shook his head and smiled wanly. 'No. I'm just a sort of freak that they've never run into before. I'm no good to them, so I won't be going. Besides, your mother will need me—"

"I'll miss you—!" Tears sprang again into his reddened eyes.

"You won't be lonely," said Starbrook with a calm that surprised himself. "That's why you're going away. If you stayed here you would be the loneliest of men because you have a thousand talents a n d abilities that would only be smothered and subdued. You'd be misunderstood, despised for your superior attributes and your whole life would be bitter. It will be far better where you are going. They will understand you and will be your own kind."

"Yes, I know all that," said Walt thinly, "—but I'll still be lonely for you—"

It would pass, Starbrook thought. It had to pass. In the end it would be the best. He knew that what he had said was true.

"You don't have to go—" he said.

"Oh, but I do! It's just kind of hard right now—"

That's what Starbrook wanted to be sure of. He smiled approvingly. "Do you know when?"

"Right away. Tonight!"

"Tonight!" All Starbrook's defenses seemed to collapse before that single word.

"In less than a couple of hours from now. Some emergency has come up. I don't know what, exactly. They've got to move the Children's Room to some other age right away—something about picking up an important mutant who is about to be destroyed in some future time. They're holding the movement now just for me."

"Then there's time for dinner together," said Starbrook. "Let's have it a time to remember."

"It's all ready," said Rose, drying her eyes. "We were waiting for you."

IT WAS a time to remember—and a time for remembering. They went back and picked out the gems from the thousand moments of happiness they had known together and touched them again, fondling them, hugging them close in their memories.

And swiftly the moments passed until there were no more left.

Walt glanced at the clock. "I've got to be going."

They got into the car and Starbrook drove slowly away from the curb. With each new moment it seemed as if the impact of realization came all over again—the realization that Walt would not be riding back this way with them. These houses and this street, those friends who were waving to Walt from

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across the way, none of them would ever know his presence again. And suddenly, Starbrook wondered how his absence would be explained—

Sounds all about them seemed to be suppressed as if it were a dream and the car was floating soundlessly through space. Almost as if without Starbrook's conscious direction it approached the college campus and came to a halt before the library where lights were visible in the main reading room.

"Maybe you won't want to come in," said Walt hesitantly.

"Of course we will," said Rose in a steady voice.

Starbrook remembered that she had never seen an entry into the Children's Room. He wondered how it would appear to her.

With Walt between them they walked slowly towards the building.

"Gee, Dad," said Walt suddenly. "I forgot to put my bike up. It looks like rain. Will you put it away for me?"

"Yeah. Yeah—sure—"

The futility of that impulsive request washed over them in a suffocating wave of desolation. Silently, they mounted the steps and entered the foyer.

"It's here." Starbrook touched his wife's hand.

"Where? I don't see anything. But, of course—"

He pointed to the inscription over the door.

She shook her head. "I can't quite make it out. That blank wall, Bill! How can there be a door there that I can't see—?"

Some of the old fear was returning to her eyes.

"It's there. Walt's going towards it, now. Perhaps he'll disappear to your eyes."

The boy turned for one final, backward glance. He smiled warmly and confidently and held up a hand. Then he walked on into the room.

Rose gave a little cry as he vanished from her sight. "Bill—can you see him? Where did he go?"

"He's right there, darling. He's talking to Miss Edythe and Dr. Rogers. There are a lot of the other boys in there, too. There's a Chinese boy and some that are European. This library must have doors into all the world."

"What's Walt doing now?"

"Just waiting. Dr. Rogers has his arm around his shoulders. He looks happy, darling. He *is* happy. This is the way it should be."

Suddenly, while he spoke, the doorway into the Children's Room seemed to grow milky. It wavered and blurred as if his vision were failing. Impulsively, he took a step forward and waved. He glimpsed Walt's face, smiling and joyous, and his hand waving in farewell."

"He's gone."

Rose crumpled against him. Her face buried in his shoulder and she stood there sobbing uncontrollably for a moment. Then at last she raised her head and looked at Starbrook. Her eyes were shining in spite of the longing in them.

"I'm sorry, Bill. I just couldn't help that one."

"Shall we go back, now?"

They started down the steps as the light drizzle began to fall.

"It's raining," said Rose. "And Walt's bike is still out. You mustn't forget to bring it in for him."

YES, Starbrook thought. I mustn't forget that. It's the last thing I can ever do for him.

He glanced towards the curb, at their car which they had left empty. With a start, he realized it wasn't empty now. There was a figure in the

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back seat, a face watching them through the window.

Rose saw it, too, and cried out in momentary fright.

A chill of terror swept through Starbrook.

The homolog.

He had forgotten it. He had supposed that Rogers had destroyed it because he'd said they wouldn't want it.

He closed his eyes a moment and prayed silently that this nightmare monster might vanish, this parody of Walt—

It was looking at them with Walt's face, Walt's eyes, and Walt's smile was upon its lips.

And it called to them.

Walt's voice.

"I hurried and got my books. I thought you wanted to get back home right away. Let's hurry now, because I left my bike out in the rain."

The hard knot within Starbrook seemed to soften. This was not the staring, empty face he had seen in Rogers' laboratory that day. He remembered how Rogers had warned him that it hadn't been completed. When it was, he'd said it would be every feeling, every emotion, every memory that had been Walt. It would react in every way exactly as Walt would have reacted.

And Rose had not seen the homolog before its completion. Something of that first shock was leaving her face as she recognized what it was. She moved forward slowly.

"It's Walt," she said in a half whisper. "It's everything of Walt that could have been ours anyway. And I thought it would be some crude mechanical thing from what you said. Oh, darling, they've taken their mutant and given our son back to us!"

Semantic control—wish fulfillment—whatever it was, Starbrook thought, the Rose who hadn't read the mutants' books would not have accepted the homolog so readily.

And yet—perhaps it was some influence they'd exercised over him, too—why not? Wasn't the homolog everything that Walt had been? The exact pattern of his instincts, reactions, emotions, memories. What else was there that constituted a human being?

Even the question of identity seemed to diminish as he thought of that last vision of Walt standing content and happy amid the other mutants about to begin their long journey.

The homolog got out of the car. He ran towards them as they moved slowly towards it.

"What's the matter? Mother—Dad, you look so strange. Is anything wrong?"

Starbrook smiled. "Not a thing in the world—son. Your mother and I were just thinking how lucky we are—in a lot of ways. Come on, we'd better beat it home and get that bike in out of the rain."

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Nothing seemed to bother them as they worked. For theirs was a timeless task . . .

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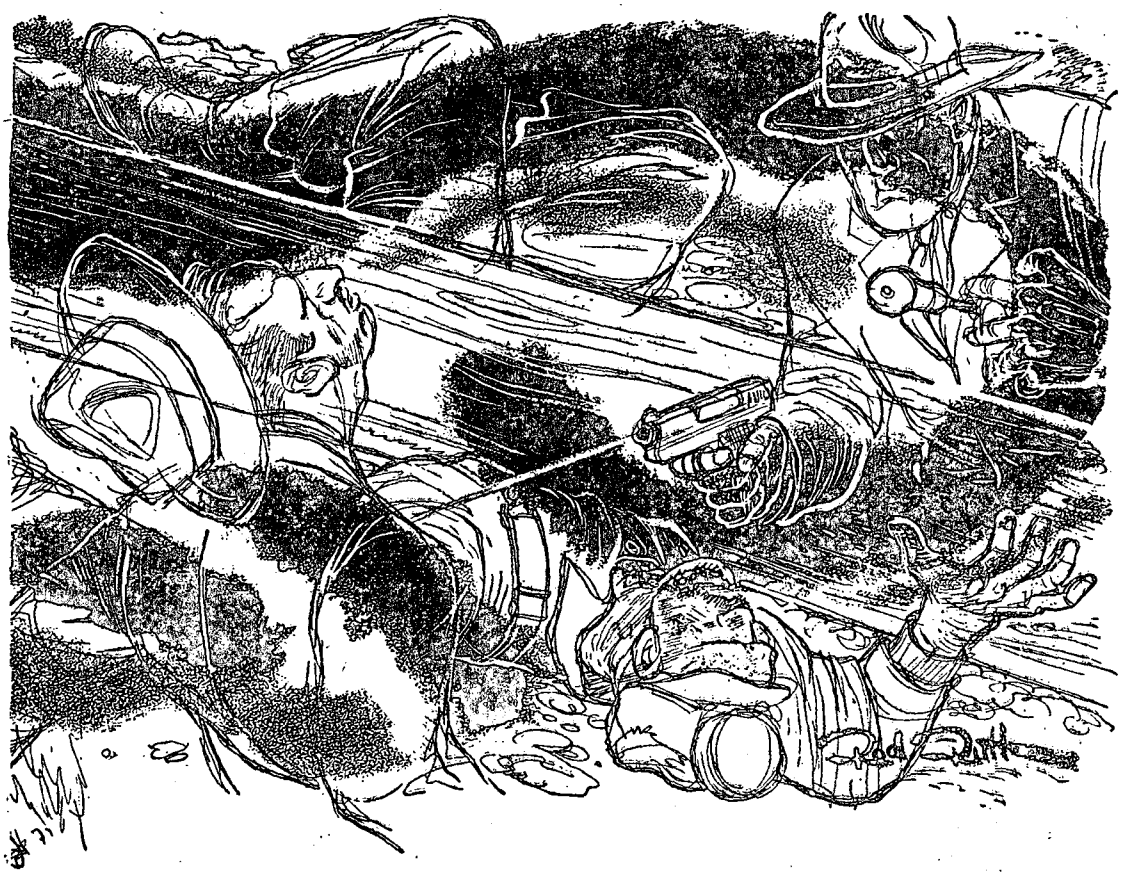

The SHROUD-SEWERS

by Berkeley Livingston

With very special needles they sewed a very special kind of cloth—for shrouds . . .

THE good-burgher sat across from his plump-cheeked wife, and looked with foreboding at his plump-cheeked children, who, neither knowing or caring about the calamity which had befallen Fornevermor, ate their food with usual relish. She, the good woman, though fear and wonder ate at her heart, did nothing to add to her man's misery, but served higher the already heaping plate, and murmured consoling words of kindness. . . .

And the toil-worn farmer squatted on his haunches before the well-provisioned barn, and whetted the plough share. He thought only of White Breast, the horse, who had for the past twenty years, served faithfully and well in the field, and had now come to his time to die. . . .

The physicianers and surgeons held meetings and raised outcries; this was

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worse than Nationalized Medicine, a thousand times worse, until one of them reminded the rest that since no one could die, pain could go on forever. Then they smiled grimly, and went back, back to their offices and homes, reassured that this *was* the best of all possible worlds. . . .

But there were those who could not think! They were all over the land of Fornevermore, in hut and hovel, on street and on field, in hospital and home; they were the sick-unto-death. Yet they could not die, though death alone could rid them of their pain.

. . . For the Shroud-Sewers had given up sewing the shrouds. . .

IN THE great hall of the Council, the old-wise men sat around the long, oval table. They sat in silence. For once, they found nothing to talk of, though certainly their minds were full of what had happened. They were waiting for the Council Courier to return with the king.

"How beautiful!" thought the king. "So soft, so delightful."

He held the small square of paper to the light; it was a stamp, issued by the far province of, Soisme, a province which held a strong grasp on its one claim to fame; it held a secret formula for the making of a blue dye, used only in its postal stamps. It was the bluest blue in the whole of Fornevermore. And for a thousand years its only tithe to the mother kingdom was the issuing of the first blue stamp to the king.

The king was searching for that faint line of purple, when a knock sounded on the door. He called a grudging, "Enter," though he did not look up.

It was the Council Courier.

"The Council of the old-wise men await their Sire's presence," the Courier announced in the prescribed manner, though his eyes said other things. They said, "Old fool! Old horned-toad! Old man who sits and looks at stamps and leaves a beautiful wife in her chamber, alone. But she is never alone long. I see to that."

But the Courier was young, tall and handsome, and thought there was nothing else in the world but woman, and love of woman. He did not know that one grows old, and love becomes an irritating memory, and that the color in the engraving of a stamp becomes more wonderful than any woman's eyes.

The king shrugged his high, bony shoulders deeper into the ermine wrap he wore about his shoulders, and winced a little as the arthritic pain took hold of the joints of his fingers. He moved toward the door with slow, grudging steps, as though he hated to leave the sanctuary of this one room he loved, and the Courier bowed low as the king stepped past him.

The old-wise men rose, waited until the king sat, then took their seats again.

Then the oldest-wisest rose at the far end of the long table, and said:

"Sire. A strange thing has befallen the kingdom of Fornevermore.

"The shroud-sewers have given up sewing the shrouds."

But the king was still lost in the color of blue, and words of the oldest-wisest meant nothing to him.

"Shroud-sewers . . . I do not understand . . . " he said, and looked around with pleading eyes. What had he to do with shroud-sewers?

The oldest-wisest swallowed his irritation. Really! This formula of having the king attend council meetings would have to be changed! Later, though. For the present it would be better to explain, simply, and let the king doze off.

"Aye," he said, "the shroud-sewers. The old, old men who sit in the temples and sew the shrouds for the dead. They

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have given up their sewing. . ."

Sudden irritation rose in the king's breast and gave voice:

"Is this so important a thing? Am I to be called every time the refuse gatherers refuse to gather refuse?"

The old-wise men had grown so old and wise there was no room in their hearts or minds for humor, and the king's words were just words. They were busy, anyway, in their own words.

The oldest-wisest answered in gentle fashion:

"No, Sire. This is a more serious matter. For without the shroud, none can die."

IT WAS then the king knew of what they spoke. He remembered the days of his youth, when the oldest-wisest of the Council took him abroad and instructed him in the duties of the kingship. They had brought him into the temples and he had watched the old, old men sewing the shrouds. He had asked what it was they were doing, for his eyes saw only the trembling, twig-like fingers running the long needles through the empty air. And they had answered that, thus it was the shrouds were sewn, and though none saw the cloth, it was there, nevertheless. And although he had gone away, his mouth saying the usual words of agreement, his eyes had not left their wonder behind.

"Surely," the king said, "there is a simple solution to the problem. Why . . . I should imagine, all you'd have to do would be get new shroud-sewers."

"Not so simple," said the oldest-wisest. "For they are not members of a guild, like the tailors, or carpenters, nor again are they like others we know, where a trade is handed down from son to son. Indeed, there are no others. For their trade is given from one to another, and of their own choosing.

"The old, old men . . ." the voice droned on in its monotonous recitation. . . .

But the king was no longer listening. He was back in spirit among the lovely blues and greens and yellows of his stamps. He heard only the conclusion and sighed in relief. . . .

". . . And so," the oldest-wisest said, "until we arrive at a solution, death must wait to claim its dues. Aye, until the day the shroud-sewers return to their sewing, none can die. . ."

HOWARD DARNELL swallowed the thick substance; it was as though his spittle had become as cotton. The sight of Joan Wilson always affected him like that. Then the heat which would come to his eye balls, the sweating of his palms, the pounding of his heart, all attendant to the sight, smell, feel of her.

She was a gorgeous piece, he had to admit. The most beautiful woman he had ever known; the most desirable; he had to have her for his own, he would commit murder to have her. . .

"Darling," the woman said, and Darnell jumped at the words. She gestured with her hand, little, slender beckoning fingers leading to desire. He moved to her side on the love seat and sat down. "Darling," she said again, "what are you thinking about?"

"Us," he said in a low tone.

"Us?" her voice was a slur of emotion, low, with a something which throbbed and pulsed. She gave the word a connotation it didn't seem possible to possess. As though there were laughter, threat, and promise in it. "What about us?"

He turned from her and buried his head in his hands. A small wry smile came and went on her mobile, sultry mouth.

"That's the trouble," he said from

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between his fingers. "There is nothing to say about *us*. Not while . . . But what is the use of saying it again. I've said it again and again. Linda is my wife. And it isn't as though she were a car or merchandise, which having been used, has a trade-in-value. I—I cannot . . ." His voice trailed off.

He didn't see her stifle the yawn which rose uncontrolled to her lips.

He went on:

"Yet I've got to do something. This has become intolerable. I love you. And you love me. You do, don't you?"

His voice and eyes begged an answer from her. And it came:

"But of course, darling. I thought that was settled, long ago."

"Yes. Yes! We love each other. . ."

"Then what is there to say?" she asked.

"Nothing." His voice was muted acceptance of a bitter taste. "Nothing. We can say to each other, I love you. Look into each other's eyes and part, contented. Hah! You know what I mean! You know I desire you with all my being, with every throb of my veins, pulse of my heart. I live but to see you, hear you, but never know the real touch of you. . . ."

Her fingers came swiftly to his lips and he kissed them, lifted his own hand to hers and kissed her palm, the back of her hand.

"Poor boy," she murmured. "You *do* suffer. But what can we do? There *is* Linda. She *is* your wife. And so long as she is . . ." the rest was left unsaid, but the meaning was clear.

"Joan! Give me this night," he said. "I will try to get her to see the light. After all, I don't love her. She can't still want me without my love. I'd—I'd better leave now. If I stayed another minute, I won't want to leave."

And for the first time, she gave him her lips, in the kind of way he'd always wanted to feel them, stirring against his, warm and open, and rich with greater promise.

Darnell walked from the room, his mind numbed from the pounding of a single phrase: *Linda must die!*

He was barely out of the room and she was out of the sofa, her long legs moving like a man's, in determined steps. The phone came out of its ragdoll's house and her fingers dialed a number.

"Let me talk to Tony," she said to the voice that answered.

". . . . Tony? How are you, honey? . . . Yes. Yes, he just left . . . I think it's in the bag! . . . Don't worry. Little Joany doesn't make with the stupe remarks . . . Sure. You can lay the book he's going home to his Linda and settle up—one way or the other. . . ."

LINDA MUST DIE! It was in the red of the stoplight, in the movement of that man's lips, as he talked to the pretty girl beside him, in that girl's laugh. . . . .

HE PARKED the car a block from the hotel. He started to walk away and suddenly thought of the small paper bag in the glove pocket. Panic broke a dew of sweat on his forehead. God! He had to be calm. From here on in, he had to make sure of every step he took. He came back and fumbled the bag out, his fingers quivering and thumb-like in their inexpertness.

The doorman greeted him, and Darnell answered pleasantly . . . *There must be no difference, nothing to make anyone remember that he had acted in any other way than his usual* . . . He shifted the paper bag to his jacket pocket before opening the door.

She was in a good mood. He saw and felt it the instant he stepped into the room. The ballet music from Faust

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was playing from the radio-phonograph, and he understood the reason for her mood. She loved Faust, particularly its ballet scenes. A small, oblong box of Rose Marie chocolates lay beside the wide, low chair, and an opened book lay on the satinwood table beside the chair. Linda was in her lounging pajamas, her rather small legs tucked under her. She looked up, and seeing him, smiled brightly, like a child who'd been expecting a promised present. He came to her and kissed her dutifully, a peck of dish-water intensity.

Her blue eyes lost a little of their warmth.

" 'Lo darling," he said, and picked out one of the chocolates. "Have fun today?"

"So-so," she said. "And you?"

"I? Ha-ha. Darling. I'm the busy executive. 'Fraid I haven't much time for fun."

She bent her body away from him, as she reached for a chocolate, so he didn't see her eyes, as she said:

"Guess you don't. That's why I told Ceil Simpson we'd come along. They're opening their house in Florida again. She and George know how much you like to fish. And they insisted we come along. . . ."

"But, but Lin . . ." he stuttered.

"Now, darling," she cut in. "Let's not have any arguing. For weeks you've been saying you'd like to get away. So I thought I'd surprise you. Besides, the office doesn't need you that much. My father saw to it that it would run without him. Surely it can do the same for his son-in-law."

She looked up with the last words, and a pleased smile blossomed on her mouth. But he saw more than the smile. He saw the doom of his hopes. Florida! He could never get her to listen. Not while she was at the home of that arch-gossip, Ceil Simpson. She had done this deliberately. Before he could stop the words they were past his lips:

"Damn it! Will you please stop trying to run my life. You and your father! He always said I'd married you for his money. Do you have to act like it was the truth?"

"Well. Didn't you?" she asked. Her lips twisted in bitterness at the sudden mottled look of his face. "Better wipe that lipstick from your mouth," she continued. "You could do me the goodness of at least removing the stains of that . . . that *thing*!"

His hand was halfway to his mouth before he realized she had trapped him. He let his hand fall. Quite suddenly he was calm. He knew what he was going to say, now.

"Her lips, my dear," he said, "are warmer than yours. Sweeter too. I want a divorce. Wait," he stopped her. "I know. You said you'd never give one to me. Very well. Then I'm going to go to her without one. How do you like that?"

Her features had the pinched look of the hungry.

"Good!" she said. "Go. But remember. I own you, lock, stock and barrel. See whether she takes you when she finds out you haven't a dime. Not a penny of your own."

They glared into each other's faces. A startled look came into her eyes. It was the moment he had been waiting for. Her heart. It was never strong. The argument had upset her.

"Water," she said in a weak voice. "Wa-ter."

He ran to the small kitchen, turned the faucet on, got a glass and filled it half way. Then he removed the bag from his pocket and poured the white grains of powder into the glass, waited for them to dissolve, and carried the glass back to the room.

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But when he came to her, she was no longer gasping for breath. The color had come back to her face.

"Here," he said. "Drink this."

She started to, then changed her mind, as she tilted the glass. Her eyes had fallen on the cage of one of a pair of love birds. Still carrying the glass, she walked to the cage, and spilled a little of the liquid into the cup at the bottom of the cage. The bird trilled a few notes and hopped down and placed its bill into the water. She smiled, and still smiling, drained the water in the glass.

But he wasn't watching her. His eyes were fixed in fascinated terror on the bird. It had returned to its perch and was trilling a wild burst of song.

Slowly, he brought his gaze to the woman's face. She was looking at him. There was something odd in her glance.

The man's mouth was open, and a thread of saliva found its way down one corner of the parted lips. He knew there was something wrong. Why, the druggist had said, "Matter of seconds. Very strong. And if you're going to give it to a bird, why, it shouldn't take more than two seconds." *Something was wrong!*

The ticking of his wrist watch was like the sounds of a gong, ticking off the seconds. No! This couldn't be; it was impossible. The woman and bird had both taken poison.

SLOWLY, he backed away from her. His foot struck the leg of the chair, and with a wild twisting movement, he whirled and ran for the door, forgetting his coat in his haste. His finger remained pressed against the elevator button until the car arrived. He stood, wild-eyed, pressed against the rear of the car, his teeth chattering. And when the car reached the bottom, he ran from the lobby as if pursued by a thousand avenging devils. He ran all the way to his car. And when he set the car into motion, it was wildly, with complete disregard of traffic. There was only one thing alive in his brain:

"She did not die. She did not die. The money is still hers. The bird didn't die either. The money is still hers!"

He didn't see the car coming to meet his at the corner. He knew only there was a wild screeching of metal, and a violent shock; and that there was a terrible pressure against his chest, and a horrible pain. He looked down and saw the steering wheel. He seemed wedged against it. He didn't start to scream until he saw that he wasn't *wedged* against it. The steel rod was in and through him. . . .

Only he wasn't dead. But he had to be. He couldn't still be alive. . . .

'ROD' HERDON leaned against the post in the shadow of the building across from Martin's Purple Parrot. Rod's hands were shoved deep in his coat pockets. One of them caressed the .38 in the special-fitting holster. Rod's car was parked not far off. He was going to use it in a very little while.

His thin lips tightened a bit, and the right hand tensed slightly on the gun, as he spotted Marty Hawkins step into the light of the canopy. He saw Marty slip the doorman something, shake his head when the doorman asked a question, and saw Marty start down the street. Rod waited until the other passed the lighted area of the night club, before he moved after him. Rod knew Marty's car was only a few feet from his own.

"Hello, Marty," Rod said softly, as the other bent to insert the key in the car door.

Marty turned his head, but made no other move.

"Surprised to see me?" Rod asked.

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He didn't wait for an answer. "Okay. Let's mosey up a bit. My heap is over there."

The other straightened slowly and with obvious reluctance. Rod walked with the other but half a step behind and to one side, the .38 pressed hard against Marty's side.

Rod sat beside Marty but far enough from him so that if the other made any sudden move for the gun, he wouldn't have a chance. Marty stared straight ahead.

"Well, where to?" Marty asked.

"To my place," Rod said.

Marty bit his lip. The boys had just come from there. They had told him in gloating terms how Rod had died; how the blood had bubbled from his lips, from his lungs-punctured by a half-dozen thrusts of an ice pick. Died! Marty realized that the whole thing had been a put-up job. The old double-cross.

The two men walked through the dimly lit lobby. Only the desk clerk was on duty. And he didn't see anything odd about two men who were walking so close together.

Rod shoved Marty into the room, and the slimmer man almost went to his knees from the sudden push. He recovered and sat on the sofa, facing Rod, who stood, straddle-legged before him. Nothing was said. Marty let his gaze wander around the room, and a look of startled disbelief came into their shallow depths. The carpet, furniture and even the walls were spattered with blood.

"Kinda messed up, ain't it?" Rod asked. "Ice picks don't make noise, either. Oh, they did their job all right. But I guess it ain't in the cards for me to go, yet."

Marty noticed for the first time that Rod had his overcoat buttoned all the way to the throat. It wasn't until Rod, with a quick movement spread the coat wide, that Marty knew the reason for it. Rod was bare to the waist.

Marty couldn't tear his eyes away from what he saw. There were a half dozen bluish-colored holes, from which dried and encrusted blood had stuck to the flesh, like red icicles.

"Pretty, ain't they?" Rod asked.

Marty shuddered. He licked dry lips. There were words to be said. Begging words, words of apology. But how were they to be said? How did one go about asking the man whom he had wanted murdered, to forgive, and forget? Besides, there was something odd about this tall, heavy-built man, who stood before him. Was it the lack of color? The strangeness of the eyes, which somehow seemed out of focus? Was it the peculiar woodenness of his walk, the lack of muscle-motion in his talk? Marty shuddered again, a shudder of odd revulsion.

"Y'know what I'm goin' to do, don't you Marty?" Rod asked.

The other shook his head.

"I'm going to put as many holes in you as I got in me," Rod said.

Marty shook his head as though he was in complete agreement with the other. He watched the gun come up; Rod pulled the trigger back with his thumb. A slow smile of horrible delight played about the bloodless lips of the man with the gun. Then the trigger came down; one time and another and again and again until there were no more bullets. At that close range there were no misses. Each struck, and as the leaden missiles struck, Marty was slapped back against the sofa.

Rod's palm could have covered the area in which the bullets struck. They should have torn Marty's heart out, so close-spaced were they, and the blood poured from Marty as from a sieve. Yet he sat t h e r e, his eyes staring

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straight ahead, blank, yet perfectly aware of what was going on.

The blood had stopped spurting, and now ran in small steady streams down the front of Marty's light coat. He seemed unaware of the fact. But Rod wasn't. A furrow of thought wrinkled his forehead. He shook his head up and down several times, and a new smile came to his lips.

"Y'know what, Marty?" he said.

"Huh?" the other said stupidly.

"I think we're both dead. Only. . ."

"Yeah. . . ."

"Only we can't die. . ."

LAWRENCE ARDEN leaned his weight against the dump truck. A long trembling sigh racked his body. He wondered if his leg was still there, and a wry smile lighted his coal-clogged features. He could see the huge beams which lay crossed over his right thigh.

A small trickle of sweat ran down the side of his temple and cheek. It was the sweat born of pain and work. He licked at his lips and the coal on them felt gritty to the taste. He wondered what time it was. Not that it made much difference. The cave-in had been complete and final. It would take the rescue party at least two days to reach him. As for t h o s e in the farthest reaches of the tunnel, they were *kaput*. He was thankful for one thing. Their screams had finally died.

Or was it he who had been screaming like that?

He knew, or rather remembered, as though it was a nightmare which had not been born of a dream, the horrible pain which had flooded his whole being the first time he had tried to shift the weight away from the timbers prisoning his thigh. An involuntary shudder escaped him. He didn't want to go through that again.

The memory of Ferguson, the supe, came to him. Fergy had come into the office, his face more dour than usual.

"Them gov'ment guys just left, sir," he had said.

"Yes," Arden had said, smiling. "I know. They want us to install more safety measures."

"Yup!" Fergy had laughed. "Wou'nt be coal mining without a man takin' a chance. Still . . ."

"Go on, man," Arden had said.

"Well, sir, that short bend in number 2 tunnel . . . Them timbers is kinda weak. Ought to have them re-inforced."

Arden's face lost its humor. Hell! That would cost four thousand dollars. Crazy, that's what it was. Those timbers had been holding for twenty years. No reason for them not to hold for twenty more. Well, they hadn't.

No. They lay across his thighs, there.

But it hadn't been the timbers! It had been a cave-in further back, and worse, there was fire back where it had occurred. And there had been twenty-four men in there.

Arden had been the first to go down with the rescue crew. They had left a tail man at the rear to call a warning if there was a further sign of trouble. He had called a warning; the weakness of a fault up above showed him it would be a matter of minutes and the whole wall would come down. But Arden, furthest up the tunnel had slipped in the slime and before he could regain his feet, found it was too late. The whole roof of the tunnel caved in; those beams hadn't held, and before Arden could scramble to safety, the beams had pinioned him to the ground.

From a great distance off, Arden could hear a tapping; it was a new rescue crew. They would reach him he knew. He would live until they did. He shifted a little, and grew sick at what happened. The pain started

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like a spark which blossomed into fire. It grew and grew until there seemed no part of him which did not know it. And at the end it filled his whole being.

It became so bad he cried, like a child. It grew worse, until he cursed it as though it were a physical being. It became like a something which was so much of him, he prayed to lose it. And at the end he slipped into the delicious sleep of the unconscious.

But always he awakened from the sleep of the near-dead.

This time it was a booming sound which awakened him. He knew what had happened. An explosion! He turned a terror-stricken face toward the near wall. If there was the smallest vent in that wall of rubble . . ."

The answer came immediately.

The whole world of his existence became a living ball of flame and he was the center of it. Fire filled his nostrils, seeped down into his lungs, ate at his insides, seared the flesh from his face, body, until they became cinders in the shape of a twisted man. The pain which had been before, was as though a taste of what was now. There was nothing except this world of pain.

Nothing was alive in him, on him, of him, except the something called his soul. And Arden prayed that it too would die, so that this terror would die with it.

But only his flesh was dead . . . The something that was Arden could not die. . .

IT WAS the moment of decision.

They sat around, the men in uniform and the men in afternoon dress, the soldiers and the leaders, the diplomats and the statesmen. And though the scene was not always the same, the settings seemed alike. A large square room, with a minimum of furniture and a maximum of wall-maps.

It was strange that this same scene was taking place simultaneously in a half dozen of the capitals of the world. For the great espionage systems which governments had developed after the last great war had done its work only too well.

The Ardens, Rods, Martys, Darnells and others had not the slightest inkling that at the very instant of their death-which-was-not-death, a hundred men all over the globe were plotting the death of an entire planet.

Yet this was the case.

They sat or walked around the rooms, grey-faced; the death of a planet is not a small undertaking, nor is it of small import, and their thoughts were not light. Yet though they plotted with the utmost care, none seemed aware of the strangest of all strange things. No one had told them, not even the best of their spies, that death had become an impossibility.

In one of those rooms a tall, handsome-looking man whose usually urbane features showed little of what went on behind the impassive and impressive facade, stopped before the largest of the scale maps. His finger trembled a little as it pointed to something on the map, and his voice was a trifle hoarse:

"We know the points of attack; here and here, and here also. From the continent, from the east and perhaps from the west also. . ."

The grave-faced soldiers nodded in agreement. The spies had done their work well. It was as the man at the map said. There *had* been reports of an attack from the west. . .

The tall man went on:

"History may call us the names by which others have been called, the names for traitors, and worse. But better to be alive. For if we wait for the

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attack this time, there may be none left to avenge the attack. General Hodges-Simpson, I therefore give you orders to launch your battle squadrons."

"The atomic fleets?" the general asked in a low voice.

"Yes. And the rest. . ."

The general's face blanched. Even he knew what that meant. Bacteriological warfare. Not alone the death of man, but also the death of every living being. Slowly, he arose and walked from the room. In half an hour the war unto death would begin.

And in a room like the first, only this was across the sea, a shorter man, whose dress was a plain business suit, and whose face did not bear the austerity of the first, gave simultaneous orders:

". . . The cosmic forces of the air arm, general. We must not be the last to enter this time. . ."

And beneath the three-foot thick walls of a stone mausoleum, protected by ten thousand men who walked like automatons, the soldiers and statesmen of another power watched a heavy-set man in a dark suit which was a little food-soiled, who wore an old-fashioned collar which seemed to choke the thick neck. His eyes seemed to be in pain behind their steel-rimmed glasses, for he kept blinking them continually. But his voice was firm:

"The blow must be struck now, at this very moment. Even while I say this, the forces of our mighty country have launched their attacks against the powers which have tried to hem us in, which have through the years failed to grant us the recognition we so richly deserve, which have tried to isolate us. But remember one thing, gentlemen! Success will not come instantly. The struggle may be long-drawn.

"Therefore make your plans in accordance. . ."

The words in the other capitals were not the same. But the meaning and results of *their* words were. Death!

Only nobody died.

FAR away from all strife and desire, a man, named Edmond Wilstock, sat in his small cabin atop the highest peak of the Sierra Nuevo Range.

Here, where the air was like the headiest wine, and the mountain flowers bloomed serenely, where the beasts came to the stream and feared not the hunter, Edmond Wilstock had made his rendezvous with death.

He alone, of all the men on earth, had forseen the struggle which was now taking place. He was an old man, worn with years, and content that he had lived a life which was full and rich, and knew that in all the years of his life he had harmed no one, had not thought ill of even the smallest being, had lived, in other words, the life of a saint, with the goodness and lack of evil of a saint. But even the saints must die. And the great doctor to whom he'd gone, had told him, "Three months, maybe at the outside, six. Science has learned a lot in the last few years. They can now tell you exactly how long it will take a man to die of his sickness."

This was a year ago.

So Edmond Wilstock sat in his cabin among the tall pines, and pondered on the strangeness of what was happening. He believed in God. And oddly, though he was a man of reason, believed in a hereafter. And he knew his time to die had passed. It was wrong. His life was done. He had nothing to go back to. The world below was no longer fit to live in. Surely, he thought, there is no longer a living being on this huge earth. But he did not know that death was no longer abroad.

So he sat in the darkness of his

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cabin, and pondered over the great mystery, until sleep closed his eyes.

He dreamed a strange dream; he was in some sort of hall. . .

THEY sat around, the old-wise, and nodded in their beards. There had come a blight on the land of Fornevermore. No one had died since the shroud-sewers had stopped their sewing. Only the physicians and surgeons seemed pleased. And why not? The sick had to go on being sick, and the aged to drag their weary bones and those whose time it had come to die had to wait.

Only the king, who had but one thought on his kingly mind, seemed not to notice. *How blue were the stamps from Soisme.* . .

The oldest-wisest looked about him. A frown worried his forehead. It seemed as if there was another who sat at the table. But there was room for only one other, the king. And he had not been summoned. Then who was it who sat in the king's chair? The oldest-wisest's eyes were not the eyes of his youth; he had to narrow them until they were almost closed to see well.

"Who are you?" he asked. And his voice woke the others from their doze.

"I?" said the stranger. "I am Edmond Wilstock."

"Edmond Wilstock?" said the oldest-wisest. "Where are you from and what do you do here?"

"From the planet, Earth. And I have come here to ask why I do not die?"

The oldest-wisest sighed in his beard. Another who wanted to know why there was no death. And from a place, called Earth. Was it not enough that the people of Fornevermore raised outcries? Were they to be bothered by the peoples of other worlds?

"Because," the oldest-wisest gave answer, "the shroud-sewers have given up their work."

Edmond Wilstock dreamed he nodded his head, as though the answer satisfied him. . . .

But Edmond Wilstock said:

"All this is well and good, for the people of Fornevermore. But what of the countless beings of other worlds? What of the sick and aged? What of those who *must* die?"

"They cannot," said the old, old man. "Not until . . ."

"I know," said Edmond Wilstock impatiently. "But surely there must be a solution to the problem. . ."

"It is why we sit here," the other replied. "We have been sitting thus for weeks, and not even the smallest idea had come to us."

"These shroud-sewers," Wilstock asked, hurrying to get on with it, "why can't you get others?"

The oldest-wisest explained, though he did not know why he did so. After all, he didn't know this man. Still . . . Perhaps another might have the answer. . . .

"You say that none can die because the shroud must first be sewn for their bodies?" Wilstock dreamed he asked.

The old, old man nodded.

"Then what about these old, old men who sew them?"

"How do you mean?"

"Who sews their shrouds?"

Strange, thought the oldest-wisest, that no one had ever asked that question. But *who* did the sewing of the old, old men's shrouds? Why no one. Yet they died. But how could they? These questions ran through the mind of the oldest-wisest.

A slow, weary smile lighted the serene countenance.

"It is the one question," the oldest-wisest said, "which none of us have asked each other. Yet it should have

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been the first. Of a truth, there are none who sew for the old, old men. Therefore the whole story of the shroud-sewers is a fable. And through the slow passage of time the fable became fact. For it is obvious they sew on nothing. . . ."

"Then," said Wilstock, "there is another agency who gives the command of death."

The oldest-wisest knew what the other meant. He looked about at the others. And for the first time he saw them as they were, tired old men who could never die, for they had never been born. No one had ever seen them, except the creatures they had commanded to be born, the dreams and ambitions of men, even of kings and cabbages.

They had arrived on the scene, old men from the beginning, and their commands had been law. Yet the first and last command, the first and last fantasy, were one and the same. It was the council of the old-wise which gave the commands.

"Go, Earth-Man," said the oldest-wisest. "And fear not. For those whose lot has been chosen, will find their number in the last drawing. . ."

EDMOND WILSTOCK lifted his head. What sound had disturbed his slumber, closed the strange dream? It came again, the hoot of a mountain owl. He lifted his head, and took a last look out into the beauty of the mountain night, and when it fell again to the table-top, it was never to lift again.

Edmond Wilstock slept the sleep of the dead, the first on all Earth to do so.

BUT the oldest-wisest knew a mistake had been made, a grave mistake. Death came only to those whose numbers were drawn. But because of the Council's command, the whole machinery of death had gone askew. Therefore *time* had to return to that moment when the command had been given, and life had to pick the threads up from there. . .

* * *

Time turned back its clock for Howard Darnell to that moment when he gave the water to his wife to drink and she emptied some of it into the bird's food container.

The bird dipped its bill into the water, hopped up on its perch, trilled a few notes, then tumbled to the bottom of the cage. Neither the man or woman had to look twice at the feathered creature to know it was dead.

Linda Darnell turned a single horrified look on her husband and sank to her knees against the bird stand. Terror gripped Darnell. His hands moved much faster than his brain acted. Before he had the faintest idea of what he was doing, he had forced her lips apart and spilled some of the water between the parted mouth.

The glass dropped from the nerveless fingers. And Darnell stumbled backward, his eyes riveted on the dead body of his wife. He hadn't meant to kill her! He had given her the water to revive her. He had forgotten the poison it contained.

As though the thought had been forced into his mind by the blow of a hammer, it came to him. Joan was responsible for this. She had wanted him to do this from the very beginning. Every action of her's had led to this final act. Suddenly a lot of things were clear to him. This Tony he had once surprised her with; she had said he was a friend. He knew now, that they had but parted from an embrace as he stepped into the room.

Darnell walked into their bedroom and went directly to his dresser. The

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blue-steel pistol felt cold in his palm. But he knew the lead in it would feel hot to the one who was going to receive it.

A new rhythm was born in his mind, as he took the elevator down; *JOAN WAS GOING TO DIE*!

Time turned back the clock for Rod Herndon as he stood leaning against the post, waiting for Marty to make his appearance. An odd warmth glowed through his whole chest, and he knew he had not long to go. Those ice picks went in deep. He knew he was going to die of internal bleeding. If only . . .

Then Marty appeared and started toward his car.

Rod knew it was now or never. He started to run, but was able to take only a few faltering steps before he sank to the ground. Suddenly a welling of blood came to his lips, a shudder shook him, and Rod was dead. And Marty drove off, secure in the knowledge he was king of the slot-machine racket, now.

Time turned back the clock for Lawrence Arden at the very instant of the explosion in the sealed-in tunnel. Death came with the first searing breath of flame.

But it all didn't amount to a hill of beans. Time turned back the clock for all these. But for the statesmen and soldiers in their map-lined offices, for the makers of destiny, the austere and aristocrat; the common man in the business suit; the stocky one in the high, celluloid collar, time stood still. For these were the ones who came a little later. Not much. A matter of hours . . . But when they gave the signal. . .

The shroud-sewers worked overtime for a while. . .

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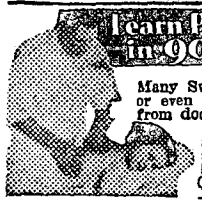

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READER'S PAGE

NO DREAM IN HIS TOFFEE

Sirs:

Your choice of stories in FA is decidedly wise. "The Red Dwarf" really carried a message that appealed to me.

Now a brickbat from a "Smithomaniac." For heavens sake get that Charles F. Myers off your list or at least throw out his very poor, cheap imitations of "Topper Takes a Trip." I have never before written a letter to an editor, having been quite content to take them as they come and have been quite well rewarded in your magazine. But this rotten, (I mean rotten from the point of the almost steal where whole sentences are picked up and the idea of the writer (?) who thinks he can imitate the inimitable Thorne Smith) substitute sticks out like an elephant on a flea. I am *not* accusing the poor idealess man of plagiarism, but let him stick to his own stories, or at least try to imitate someone less gifted than he.

John H. Clayton,
174 Main St.,
Randolph, N.Y.

We would like to point out that there is quite a difference between imitation and carrying on a tradition. Thorne Smith is dead, a lamentable fact, but this does not constitute a reason for other talented writers to ignore the tradition that Thorne Smith started in the literary world. Mr. Myers is a talented writer, as the great majority of our readers have already testified to, and he is writing in the tradition of Thorne Smith because his natural talents lie in that field. We will differ with you on your assertion that his stories are cheap imitations or rotten substitutes because they are neither imitations nor substitutes. They are simply following a pattern of writing that Thorne Smith started and made successful. As our readers have stated in countless letters, Mr. Myers' stories are great entertainment. And that's what we are in business for—to entertain our readers. As long as the great majority of them are satisfied—then we are too. And we assure you they are. We are glad to hear, incidentally, that you liked "The Red Dwarf." Mr. Shaver has another novel-length story coming in our next issue. ..... Ed.

BOUQUETS FOR ARNO AND CASEY

Sirs:

This is my first letter to any magazine. It will be short and sweet.

I have been buying FA for quite some time and enjoying the fantasy stories found there, but until now I have never been able to offer wholehearted approval and praise.

In the July issue there are two stories that you have never surpassed, namely, "Carrion Crypt" by Richard Casey, and "Secret of the Yomar" by Elroy Arno. Congratulations!

Sturgeon's "Largo" was rather nice, still there was something missing. "Toffee Takes a Trip" by Charles F. Myers was very good and had some very humorous descriptions, such as: "Another blustering wave tripped, fell flat on its watery face, and embarrassedly dissolved into a foolish fringe of giggling froth." I like Myers' style.

"Goddess of the Golden Flame," and "Peter Backs a Punch" were not very new. Their plot has been used many times before. . . . But continue with Arno and Casey. They're tops!

H. D. Massey,
613 S. Coronado St.,
Los Angeles 5, Cal.

Thanks a lot, Mr. Massey, and you can rest assured that both Mr. Arno and Mr. Casey will appear at frequent intervals in FA.....Ed.

VIRGINIA FANS PLEASE NOTE

Sirs:

Will you please publish the following announcement in Fantastic Adventures:

All S-F and Fantasy readers in Virginia who are anxious to form a fan club please get in touch with me.

W. L. Hudson,
Roseland, Va.

HE WANTS MORE NOVELS

Sirs:

I have just finished reading "Goddess of the Golden Flame," and enjoyed it very much. However, Elroy Arno's "Secret of the Yomar" knocked it out of first place. This is twice in a row this has happened, the lead novels falling out.

Judging from Jack Clement's letter in the last issue, the shorts seem to be running away with the honors. This is somewhat discouraging to a guy who buys a favorite magazine in hopes of reading a long smashing novel. Believe me, lead novels are what count, in my opinion.

Well, here's hoping you'll go monthly.

James W. Ayers,
609 1st St.,
Attala, Ala.

No sooner said than done, James. We are monthly from this issue on. So your favorite

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magazine will give you twice as much enjoyment in the future. And incidentally, how did you like the lead novel in this issue? Let us know...Ed.

HE JUST COULDN'T WAIT

Sirs:

Have just finished reading "The Tale of the Red Dwarf" in your May issue. It was swell! So much so that I just had to let you know even before I went on reading the other stories in the issue. Thanks for a grand work of word arranging and style. Humans as a whole ought to let their minds go free once in a while and enjoy the vast and many delights of an unlimited imagination. I'll be looking forward to future FA's.

William Muir Cox,
Princeton Junction, N.J.

Glad you enjoyed Dick Shaver's story so much, Bill, and incidentally, next month Shaver will be back with another humdinger, a novel concerning a "Witch of the Andes."....Ed.

TOPS IN THE FIELD

Sirs:

I have just finished the May issue of FA. I can't praise it highly enough. Leroy Yerxa's story, "The Emperor's Eye" rates tops with me.

My deepest thanks for the late David Wright O'Brien's contribution to this issue. I first became acquainted with his work through FA with a humorous spirit-mover called, "The Place Is Familiar"—remember? This particular story earned O'Brien my deepest admiration. He will be remembered by all of his devoted readers.

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is my outlet to relaxation. Too many of my friends have no understanding of my interest in fantasy.

One other item: The incomparable Richard S. Shaver's philosophical philanderings fascinate me to no end. A touch of philosophy coupled with true fantasy. I enjoyed the "Red Dwarf" very much. It is definitely food for thought for those of us with a broad outlook on fantasy.

Oh, yes, I can't forget to mention the novel, "Forever Is Too Long" by Chester S. Geier in the March issue. It was magnificent to say the least. Geier has a great knack for keeping one jump ahead of the reader. I was completely carried away by this great novel. I only wish novels like this could be published in book form.

Gentlemen, your magazine is definitely tops in the fiction field!

James L. Cribelar,
1140 N. Alton Ave.,
Indianapolis 8, Ind.

And thank you, James. Your comment about being a broadminded person, is, incidentally, an interesting one. There are a few so-called "critics" of Mr. Shaver's work in FA and Amazing Stories —even men with such high-sounding titles as PHD behind their name who are blind to everything except what is written in a scientific textbook. These "critics" are a typical example of the frustrated way of thinking going on in a good portion

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of the world around us today. They could never admit the possibility that they could be wrong and Mr. Shaver right—even for the sake of argument. And what is worse, because their petty ideas are touched upon by Mr. Shaver, they could never admit that his stories are first-class entertainment. It takes all kinds.....Ed.

MAGAZINES TO SWAP

Sirs:

I have been a reader of AS & FA and most of the other stf magazines for a great many years. And I want to say that I think your magazine surpasses them all. Not only are your stories the best in the field, but your artwork is also the best. A combination that is hard to beat.

I have quite a number of stf and fantasy magazines that I have collected over a long period of time, and I would like to sell or trade them with other readers. Anybody desiring a list of what I have can write me. Thanks.

Margaret Irving,
Box 58,
Creswell, Ore.

We'll bet you get a lot of replies.....Ed.

AN OUTSTANDING ISSUE

Sirs:

Ordinarily I'm not one of those people who write letters to magazines, but your May issue was so much above the average I felt impelled to finally write and tell you about it.

"The Tale of the Red Dwarf" was excellent. Mr. Shaver is certainly without peer in the realm of fantasy. What a sense of humor! (And what sound common sense!)

"Tomorrow and Tomorrow" was a poignantly beautiful story. It sort of left a lump in my throat after I finished reading it.

"The Emperor's Eye" had a good historical background, but hasn't the "magical bit—of-glass" angle been overdone of late?

"Shades of Henry Morgan" was a first-rate action story with no phony love-interest to cloud up the atmosphere.

"Painting of the Prophet" was clever, with good characterization.

"When the Spirit Moves Me" tried to be whimsical and succeeded mostly in being whamsical.

And finally, "Meet My Mummy." This seemed to me to be more of a cheap copy of Raymond Chandler's style. The one living Chandler is enough.

Well, that is one girl's opinion. Here's wishing you bigger and better excursions to cloud-cuckoo land.

Miss Elaine Scott,
28 Lawrence St.
Boston, Mass.

Well, we don't know exactly what you mean by cloud-cuckoo land, Elaine, but we can promise that we'll take you on many more excursions into the land of fantasy in the coming months. And next time don't be backward about writing us.

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We'd like to hear from you again.....Ed.

TECHNICAL ERRORS NOTED

Sirs:

After reading Leroy Yerxa's story, "The Emperor's Eye," I just had to sit down and write you about the number of errors I found in it.

First, the author leads us to believe by various statements in the story that he knows about the period of which he writes. I say this so that no charges may be leveled at me. Here are a few examples of errors I found in reading the story:

"Pictures wrought of bronze and gold were everywhere." The Romans had wall paintings, but not of bronze or gold.

The death of Agrippa does not agree with the account given by Tacitus—which, incidentally, is much more dramatic than Yerxa's account.

The desription of Nero: "His hair reminded me of the dead woman." . . . According to Yerxa she had dark tresses. In actuality, Nero was blond. "Slate colored eyes." Nero had blue eyes, watery.

"Pale yellow light touching the colosseum." The Colosseum was built by Vespasian, who became Emperor in 69 A.D. Nero died in 68 A.D.

"Streets were lighted with torches." Rome's streets were notoriously dark and gloomy.

"I slipped over the ornate balcony, grasped the metal strands with both hands." Metal balconies were unknown in that day.

Nero and his wife were staying in the beautiful apartment in the heart of the Colosseum. There were no apartments in the Colosseum.

"I don't think the citizens of Rome would approve paying their taxes for the construction of the Golden House." I don't think they would either. They didn't pay taxes. The public treasury was made up of grants from wills and taxes from the provinces and subject nations.

Well, I have only mentioned a few that stood out. There were many more. I believe an author should build his story on truth—not only details. And historical truth is much more interesting than garbled fiction. Above all, I must register an objection to an author pretending to authority (the two words are related, you see) in a subject of which he knows little.

Jay Williams,
Pleasant Valley Rd.,
Redding, Conn.

First of all we would like to point out that it will be impossible for Mr. Yerxa to reply to your criticisms since he passed away a year ago. But his wife informs us that he did considerable research on the subject before writing the story. One of the books he used was "Christ and Caesar," by Durant. . . . But we would like to say that very often an author finds it necessary to deviate slightly from facts as we know them in writing a story. However, we are very glad to receive letters such as yours, proving your interest in the stories we publish. Everything helps.....Ed.

* * *

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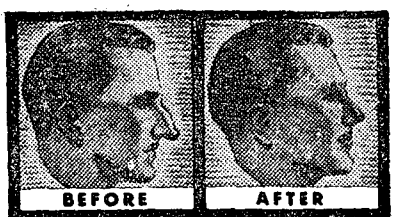

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ANCIENT MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

By PETE BOGG

OUR wedding services still hold traces of violence used in the primitive capture of brides. The best man represents the warrior that ran interference while the groom-to-be dragged off the girl of his choice, after having knocked her unconscious to avoid any arguments that would mar the beginning of their new life together. The bride of long ago had to be alert to keep the demons that were always lurking about from putting a hex on her. She wore a six-pence in her shoe and hid behind a veil and was supported by her attendants. She walked on a blossom strewn path to ward off the hatred of a "fallen angel" who was jealous of human happiness.

In some countries they covered the pathway to the church with emblems of the bridegrooms trade. For instance, for a blacksmith's wedding the path would be strewn with horse shoes and anvils. Perhaps the custom of the wedded couple walking out beneath an arch of weapons grew out of this old custom. Throwing old shoes originated in the East. After an Asiatic wedding the groom took off his slipper and conked his bride over the head with it to show everyone who was boss and to announce her obedience to him. In old England the man gave his betrothed a "betrothal penny" which was like "earnest money" for her purchase. Then came the custom of giving all sorts of rings, at the same time taking their vows. The wedding rings became so important that if the groom couldn't afford to buy one he could hire a hoop. To stress obedience, the ring was worn on the left hand because it received less abuse, and worn on the third finger for the Egyptians said that a sensitive nerve ran from that finger directly to the heart.

The threshold of the new home had to be guarded against witchcraft, so it was festooned with flowers that were sprayed with perfume to lure the good spirits. The bride would offend the gods if she stepped on the threshold, so she had to be carried over by her husband, and if he should stumble with her they would certainly be in for a heap of trouble. A petting stone, a place where the bride left all her pet peeves and bad humors, was placed outside the church and the bridal party had to jump over it. Sometimes the best man held a stick up by the door of the church for the bride to leap over. In some places when the younger sister was married first, the older ones had to dance in their stocking feet in a pig trough at the wedding as punishment for her failure to find a husband.

* * *

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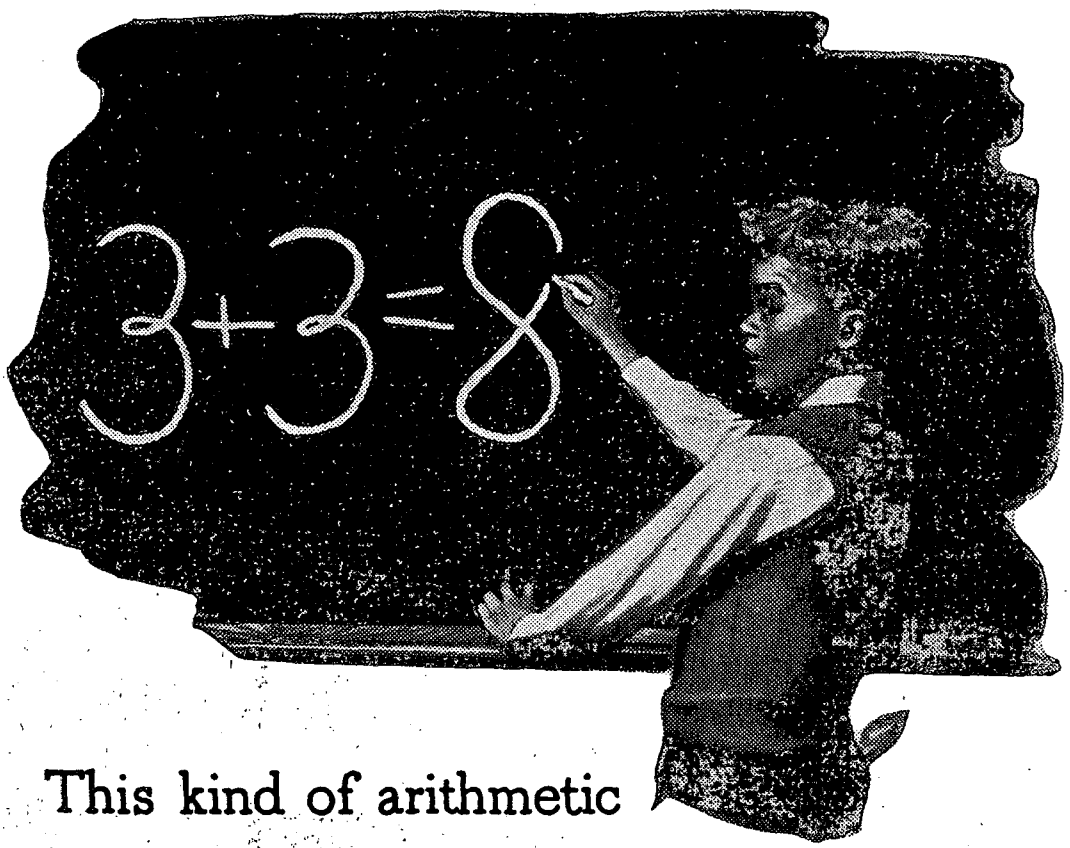

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